

SPRING FOOTBALL PREVIEW

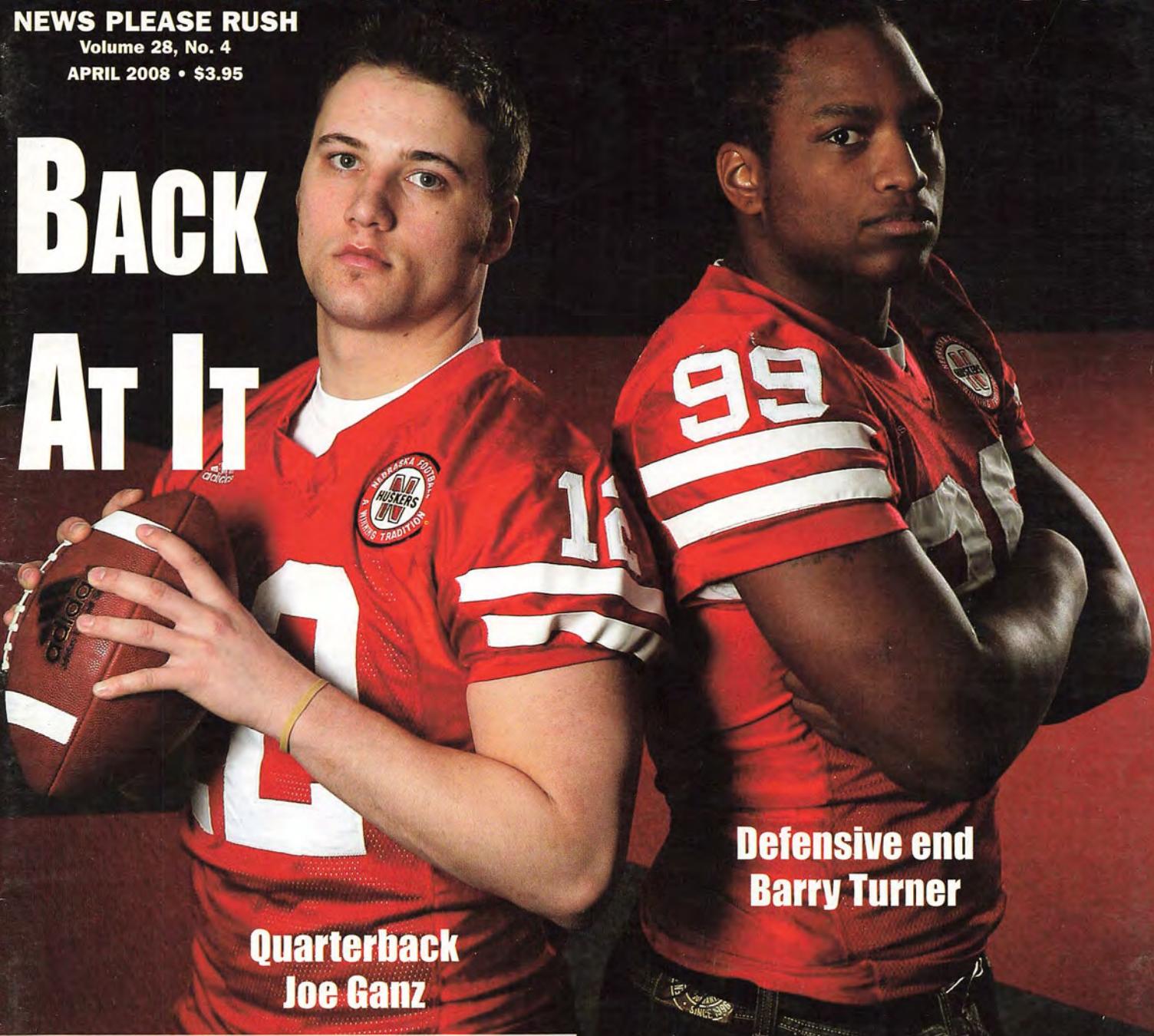
Huskers Illustrated

NEWS PLEASE RUSH

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BACK
AT IT



Quarterback
Joe Ganz

Defensive end
Barry Turner

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The Wait Is Over

Pelini and his new coaching staff have many questions to answer



**Brian
HILL**

SPRING FOOTBALL has long since taken on a life of its own. A common question this "off-season" (there really isn't one) has been whether or not the Red-White Spring Game will be a sellout.

Nebraska has averaged nearly 60,000 fans for its Spring Game over the past four seasons, and the record — 63,417 in 2005 — is almost certain to fall on April 19.

The anticipation for this year's public unveiling has been heightened by the debut of coach Bo Pelini and his staff. That new staff will attempt to answer a number of questions when spring practice begins March 26. Contributing editor Mike Babcock proposes five questions in our spring football preview section in this edition of Huskers Illustrated.

The package includes a look at the offense, featuring senior quarterback Joe Ganz, and a look at the defense, focusing on senior defensive end Barry Turner.

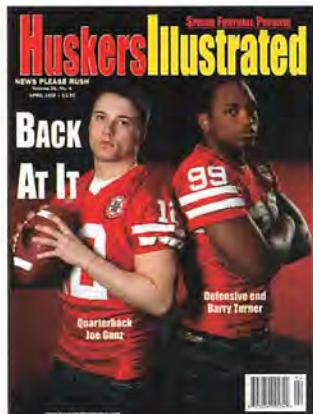
Speaking of seniors, we take a look at the ceremonies honoring basketball players Aleks Maric and Danielle Page in this month's issue.

Maric and the Nebraska men's team survived a potentially devastating 0-4 start in the Big 12 Conference and went 7-5 the rest of the way to enter the conference tournament with momentum and the No. 7 seed. The women's team entered their conference tournament as the sixth seed, but as this issue was going to press, they were upset by 11th-seeded Kansas 73-67 in the opening round.

Despite each Husker basketball team

ON THE COVER

Seniors Joe Ganz and Barry Turner and their Nebraska teammates are getting set for the start of spring football practice March 26. Cover photo by Scott Bruhn.



having just one senior, both were likely to extend their seasons when tournament berths were announced. We'll have season wrap-ups in our next issue.

In baseball, Nebraska completed a perfect home stand, taking a 10-game winning streak and an 11-2 record into conference play. Senior catcher Mitch Abeita, who already had exceeded last year's home run total, is featured. Other feature subjects in our April edition include sophomore shot putter Trey Jordan and softball player Darcy Rutherford, a junior outfielder.

Next month, we'll update all of the spring sports and wrap up the postseason finishes for the winter sports. And, of course, we'll have complete coverage of spring football. We're certain there will be all kinds of storylines.

Amid all the pre-spring hoopla came a reality check a little more than two weeks before the start of practice. At least four current Huskers and two former players were in the news for the wrong reasons. The most serious situation involved senior offensive lineman Andy Christensen, who wound up in jail and indefinitely suspended from the team after an incident at a downtown bar.

Pelini issued a statement the morning after the Christensen incident. And he reportedly read the riot act to the squad at a Monday team meeting.

"I tell the players that you're representing this program all of the time — from the time you wake up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night. And every decision you make affects our program," Pelini told the Lincoln Journal Star. "If you make a decision contrary to the overall benefit of the program, there will be repercussions . . . It's about accountability. There's not a lot of gray area. It's black and white — do the right thing."

It's certainly not the way the new staff wanted to enter the spring. ■

Huskers Illustrated

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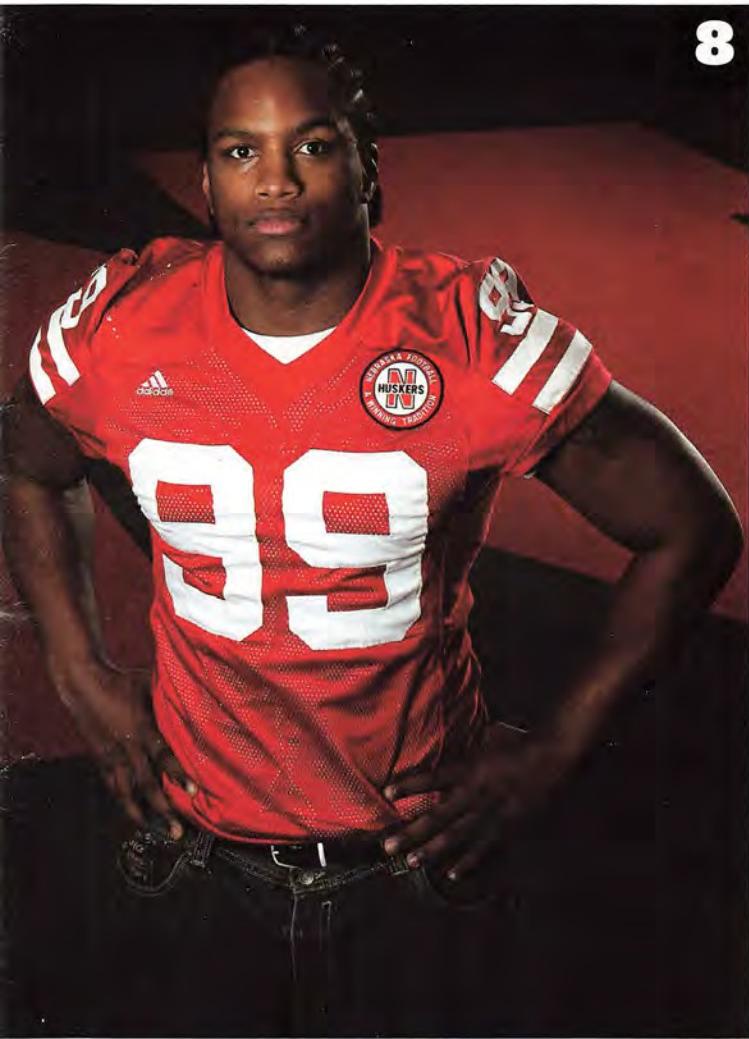
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Seniors Barry Turner (above) and Joe Ganz say they are taking nothing for granted, despite their edge in experience. They understand that every job will be open when the Huskers begin spring practice March 26 under new coach Bo Pelini. *By Mike Babcock*

14 FIVE QUESTIONS

A look at just a few of the questions that need to be answered during spring football.

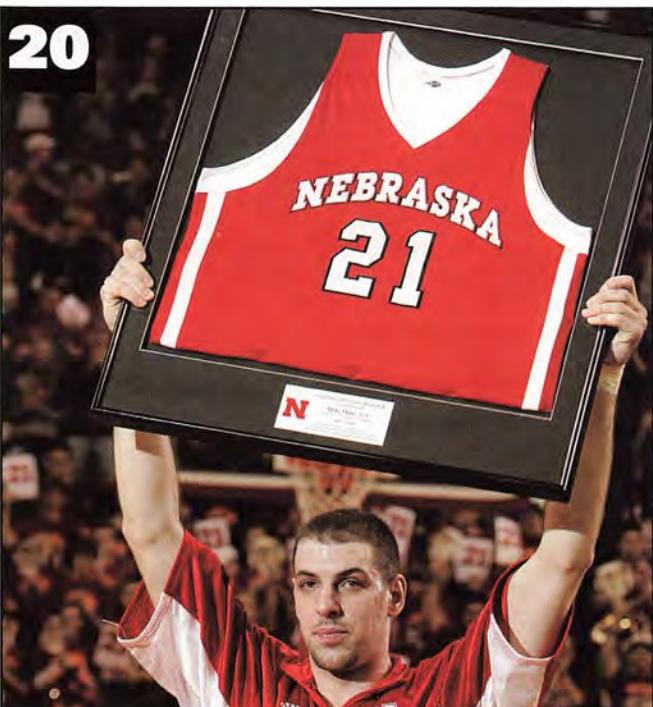
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Comfortable Relationship

Carl Pelini says he certainly won't be afraid to tell his younger brother exactly what he thinks



**Terry
DOUGLASS**

THE FAMILY DYNAMICS within Nebraska's football coaching staff are interesting to say the least.

First, there's the 40-year-old Bo Pelini serving as the Cornhuskers' first-year head coach. Then there's Carl Pelini, Bo's older brother by nearly 2 1/2 years, working as Nebraska's defensive coordinator, meaning that, technically, his little brother is indeed his boss.

No doubt, some might be wondering just exactly how the situation is going to work out.

"I have no problem with it at all," Carl Pelini said. "I don't even think of it that way."

Bo Pelini also downplays any notion that the situation might somehow be awkward. After all, the two have worked together before as Carl was a graduate assistant while Bo was the defensive coordinator at Nebraska in 2003.

"It's not like the guys on my staff work for me, they work with me," Bo Pelini said. "That's just more my approach. At the end of the day, somebody's got to make the final decision on some things. I'm going to make the call that I think is right, but everybody has input, and everybody has a say in this thing."

That, Carl said, is the advantage to the situation. While recognizing that his younger brother is the head coach, Carl said he certainly won't be afraid to tell Bo exactly what he thinks.

"I would never hesitate to give Bo my opinion," Pelini said. "He's the one who's in charge, and he's going to make the final decision, but I think sometimes he appreciates that from me. In any organization, people are maybe sometimes unwilling to say exactly what they think or walk on egg shells in terms of disagreeing with the boss."

"Sometimes, it's not even disagreeing as much as it is playing devil's advocate or offering suggestions for a different way to do things."

Carl insists that a working relationship between he and Bo, who will call the defense this season for Nebraska, will be very comfortable. The two share the same philosophies in terms of both schemes and the intense way they want the Huskers to play defensively.

"Definitely, there is a system that we play and certain concepts that we use X's and O's-wise, but ultimately, those things are meaningless if you don't get the players to, as Bo would say, buy into the culture of what we're trying to develop here," Carl said. "There's a way we want them to play, physically, and we want them to understand the game and start to think the game. If all those things don't happen, then your scheme means nothing."

Carl, whose only previous season as a defensive coordinator came in 2004 at Division II Minnesota State, doesn't lack confidence in his coaching abilities. Owner of master's degrees in journalism and education, the Youngstown, Ohio, native has taught classes at both the high school and college levels and believes that

his academic experience greatly benefits him as a football coach.

"I think the one thing that has helped me over the years is that I have learned the different learning styles and the way you have to approach different kids so differently for them to understand the different points you're trying to get across," said Pelini, noting that he prides himself on being an excellent communicator. "I think I'm able to get my point across to where it's understandable to most people. If they're not getting it, I think I'm able to change my strategy and come at it in a different way, and I work hard at that."

Seemingly on his way to a successful career as a high school coach and teacher, Pelini decided against taking a comfortable path. In 2003, he came to Nebraska as a graduate assistant, making a paltry sum of \$12,000 a year in hopes of one day possibly winding up in a position like the one he occupies now.

To most, the risk might have seemed too great. After all, what would make someone as academically accomplished as Pelini possibly want to work as a college football coach?

"It would have to start with the adrenaline," he said. "I'm a very competitive person. I don't think I could be in a field that isn't competitive. I thrive on that."

Coaching can also bring about a feeling of satisfaction, Pelini said.

"Coaching gives me an opportunity to be a teacher, it gives me an opportunity to be a father figure to the guys, and in the end, it gives me an opportunity to take a kid and through different motivational ways, get him to achieve his potential to have success in football and life," Pelini said. "There are just so many intrinsic rewards to this profession. It's easy to say that I love it and I wouldn't want to be doing anything else."

Away from football, Pelini said he's always reading a book of some sort. Subject matter he tends to gravitate to includes historical fiction and military history. Sometimes, he just likes to pick up a good detective novel.

A bona fide history buff, Pelini said he's also spent a good deal of time studying not only the history of the Nebraska football program, but the history of the state itself and its people. He said his appreciation for the Cornhusker state started in his first coaching stop here in 2003 and has continued since his return.

Apparently, Pelini's research has only fueled his desire to excel at his newest challenge.

"For a guy who was born and raised in Ohio, I've worked hard to school myself to what Nebraska football is all about and what the state is all about as a whole," Pelini said. "From that, one thing I do understand is the tremendous amount of responsibility that I have here and how many people are relying on me and how important this is to so many people."

"As a competitor, I think about that every day when I'm coming to work. I use that as a motivator." ■

Terry Douglass is the sports editor of the Grand Island (Neb.) Independent. He can be reached at terry.douglass@msn.com.

Having Fun

'Everybody is content with their role' as Huskers put together winning streak



**Curt
McKEEVER**

IT WAS MARCH 11, and the temperature at Haymarket Park, where Nebraska's baseball team was finishing off a 10-0 run through its longest home stand of the season, was hovering around 60.

About the only thing junior third baseman Jake Mort could think of to complain about was the fact that one day earlier DJ Belfonte, on his 332nd plate appearance for the Huskers, had hit his first career home run.

"He's making me look bad," said Mort, having gone a longer stretch without driving a ball over an outfield fence.

If, indeed, that really was his biggest gripe, you can be sure that things are markedly improved in the NU clubhouse, as well as on the field, from a year ago.

While 13 games hardly defines a season, Nebraska's 11-2 start was an improvement of three wins from the same point as last year. Heck, for that matter, a 10-game winning streak heading into Big 12 Conference play was six more than the longest run of success in 2007.

Yep, save for a home run, things couldn't be going much better in Mort's eyes.

"To be honest, any team in the past I've ever been with, you couldn't ask for anything better," he said. "The biggest key I see is that guys are having fun. Everybody's playing a role, and everybody's fitting into it, and everybody is content with their role. That's why things are clicking for us."

On March 10, Nebraska was wrapping up its second four-game series sweep of the young season. The obvious story of that 7-0 win against Northern Colorado was Aaron Pribanic throwing the first nine-inning shutout of the season.

Pribanic, a transfer from Hutchinson (Kan.) Community College, had made his first start at NU eight days earlier, and tossed a seven-inning complete game in a rout of UC Riverside. Though obviously tickled that Pribanic was able to build off that with another composed effort, Nebraska coach Mike Anderson pointed to some less-obvious things that made his team's 10th win feel special.

"Jake Opitz running the ball out hard in the eighth inning, diving on some plays, Thad Weber in our dugout, Jeff Tezak in our dugout," Anderson said. "It was a good win, but there's a lot of little things that went on today that were great."

Weber — the lone underclassman pitcher off last year's team who was selected in the Major League Draft in June and opted to return to Nebraska — was there to support his teammates on a day that his father was having heart-bypass surgery.

Tezak was in the dugout on crutches after having undergone season-ending knee surgery.

That should tell you all you need to know about how much these Huskers — 20 of whom had yet to play in a game before this season — enjoy one another.

Or what they're willing to do to wipe away the disappointment of a trying 2007 season in which off-the-field issues that led to suspensions and dismissals made it hard to appreciate a late-year

mini-surge that ended in the championship round of the NCAA regional at Tempe, Ariz.

Senior Craig Corriston may have summed up the early success of 2008 best when he said, "That's the good thing about having a young team — nobody's set in their ways. They're all open-minded about doing whatever Coach asks them to do, whatever the team needs them to do."

Consider this scene from the series against UC Riverside.

During the second game of a double-header, the Huskers were holding a 5-2, ninth-inning lead, but the Highlanders had two base runners and Ben Price, who'd homered earlier in the series, at the plate.

Price would put a good swing on a pitch and drive a ball the opposite way to left field. Dan Johnston recognized it, too, and so he immediately retreated to the wall and waited there hoping to make a game-ending catch.

Johnston got maybe a couple feet to spare, so the play wound up looking routine — except that in this case, the guy who caught the ball is a shortstop by trade.

Anderson will tell you this group of Huskers isn't blessed with more players who are capable of playing multiple positions. It's just that this team could need to be more versatile in order to achieve.

Through its first eight contests, Nebraska had used four players at first and seven outfielders. The unusually high numbers were partly a product of matchup considerations, but also player availability.

For instance, the player penciled to be NU's opening-day first baseman, Tyler Farst, didn't see action until the ninth game because of a hamstring injury.

Corriston also missed the first six games as penalty for an NCAA rules violation. After he returned, the Huskers lost designated hitter Tezak, who led last year's team in hitting. And so Corriston, who spent most of 2007 playing third, was getting ready to be called upon to fill spots anywhere from first to left field to DH.

"I'm just going to be comfortable being uncomfortable," he said, smiling. "I've got to be open-minded, because, yeah, I don't know where I'm going to be from day to day. (But) everybody's open-minded. Nobody's set in their ways."

Good thing, because even Anderson admits to having written in lineups that make him think of sandlot baseball. While he acknowledged the obvious risk involved in putting players out of their normal positions, his feeling about his sixth Nebraska team was that he'd have "to be a little versatile to create some offense."

Of NU's 17 position players who were available in the first 13 games, 15 started.

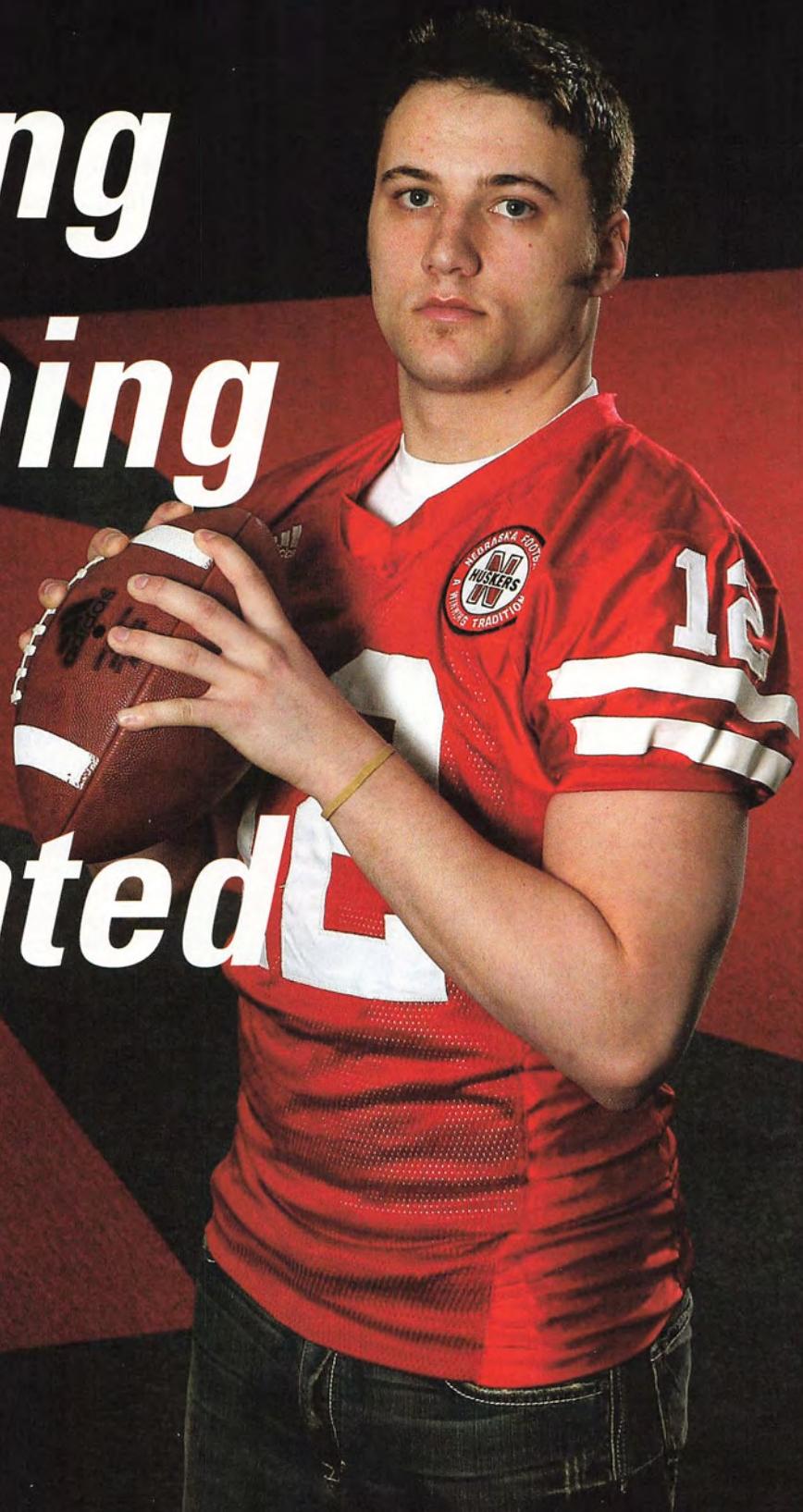
It was a formula that had the Huskers off and running like they'd hoped.

"We're still a long way away from the College World Series," Belfonte said. "Now, if we have this kind of streak going at the end of May into June, then I'll say we're feeling pretty good about things. Early in the year, we'll take it for what it's worth." ■

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football, he is the primary beat writer for baseball. Curt can be reached at cmckeever@journalstar.com

COVER STORY

Taking Nothing for Granted



Offense: Joe Ganz — Senior Quarterback

SPRING FOOTBALL PREVIEW

**Stories By Mike Babcock
Photos By Scott Bruhn**

'I've worked too hard to let somebody take that from me'

W

hen Joe Ganz met Tommie Frazier for the first time, he reacted the way most fans would react. He asked for Frazier's autograph on a Nebraska hat.

He was hesitant to approach Frazier even though he was on a recruiting trip and meeting former players was an intended part of the experience.

Ganz had admired the Cornhusker quarterback as a youngster growing up in suburban Chicago. His earliest recollection of Frazier was of the 75-yard touchdown run against Florida on the final play from scrimmage in the third quarter of a 62-24 victory in the 1996 Fiesta Bowl game. Frazier broke seven tackles during the run.

Ganz was at an impressionable age, having celebrated his 10th birthday a month before. The touchdown run was "awesome," he said.

From that point on, Ganz was a Nebraska football fan. Most his age on Chicago's south side cheered for Notre Dame or Michigan or Ohio State.

He liked Ohio State, largely because of All-America linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer. But his primary allegiance was to Nebraska. He wore a Cornhusker jacket to school. He wore Cornhusker hats. And when he played college football video games, the Cornhuskers were always his team. "I went a little overboard," he said.

Oh yes, when Mike Stuntz took a pitch from Thunder Collins on a double reverse and passed to Eric Crouch for a touchdown against Oklahoma in 2001, Ganz was watching on television in his basement, and "screaming."

Ganz not only met Stuntz, the two were teammates for two seasons and have remained friends. "We hang out on weekends," said Ganz.

Stuntz, who is still in school and regularly works out in the weight room at the Tom and Nancy Osborne Complex, was recently mistaken for him, Ganz said. "So now he calls me 'Stuntz.'"

Ganz isn't likely to be mistaken for someone else given the finish to his junior season. He started the final three games, after Sam Keller was injured, and passed for 1,399 yards and 15 touchdowns, including a school-record seven in a 73-21 victory against Kansas State. His 510 passing

JOE GANZ AT A GLANCE

Year	G/GS	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yds	Yds/G	TD
2004						Redshirt		
2005						Did Not Play		
2006	5/0	7	13	0	53.8	122	24.2	1
2007	6/3	89	152	7	58.6	1,435	239.2	16
Totals	11/3	96	165	7	58.2	1,557	141.5	17

yards that day in Memorial Stadium also were a school record.

Despite such numbers, however, Ganz takes nothing for granted. Four other quarterbacks will be competing for the starting job this spring. In addition to senior Beau Davis, sophomore Zac Lee and redshirted freshman Patrick Witt, freshman Kody Spano, a member of coach Bo Pelini's first recruiting class, has enrolled for second-semester classes. Even so, "I've worked too hard to let somebody take that from me," Ganz said.

He has an advantage not only because of his experience but also because the offense isn't likely to change dramatically with offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Shawn Watson's being retained. Ganz expects some terminology to change, "less verbiage" in the passing game. But the playbook will be about the same.

Ganz is "really comfortable" in the system. "It was nice to get in those games, to know how fast things are," he said. "I've got a lot of confidence going in."

Not much needs to change given Nebraska's offensive production last season. It ranked seventh nationally in passing offense (323.8 yards per game), ninth in total offense (468.2) and 28th in scoring offense (33.4 points).

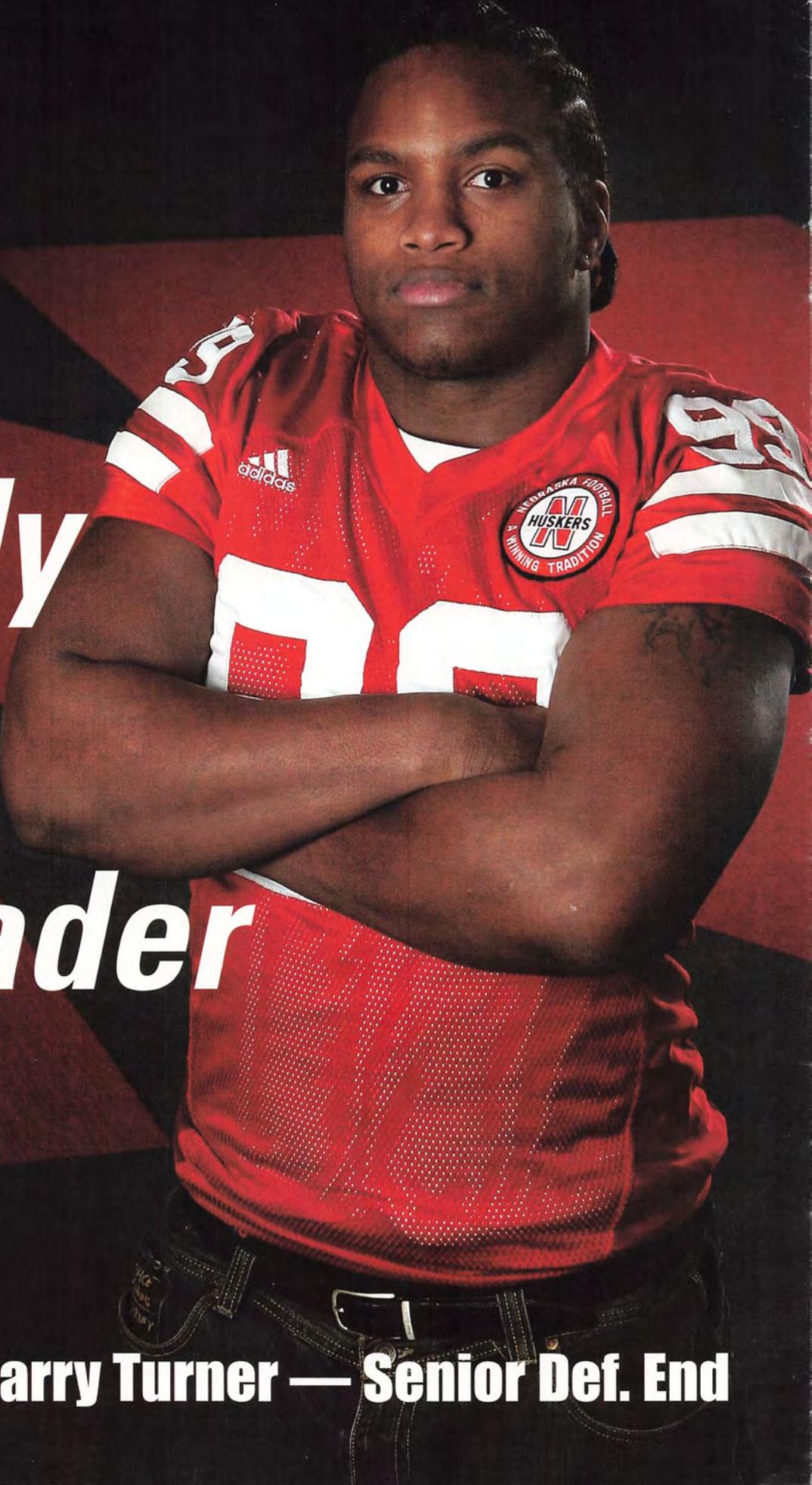
The running game needs to improve. But the top five rushers return, led by Marlon Lucky, who also broke the school record for pass receptions with 75. The senior from North Hollywood, Calif., rushed for 1,019 yards and nine touchdowns. He'll be challenged by sophomores Quentin Castille and Roy Helu Jr. and seniors Cody Glenn and Kenny Wilson, who missed all of last season because of injury.

Lucky and Ganz are among six returning offensive

Continued on Page 12

COVER STORY

*Ready
to be
a Leader*



Defense: Barry Turner — Senior Def. End

SPRING FOOTBALL PREVIEW

'I feel like I've got the experience and the edge'

The slate has been wiped clean. Every job will be open when spring football practice begins on March 26. Starting in the past guarantees nothing.

Bo Pelini made that clear from the beginning. And it's "fine with me,"

Barry Turner said recently. "I feel like I've got the experience and the edge."

Turner is among the most experienced players on defense, among the most experienced on the team, for that matter.

The senior defensive end has played without redshirting, 38 games. He earned freshman All-American honors. He backed up Jay Moore, a three-year starter. And when Moore finished, he stepped in and started 11 of 12 games last season.

But he's back at square one now, like everyone else.

"If a guy wins that spot, he wins that spot. The coaches are going to play the best players to win. It's a business of winning. So they're going to play the best ones. The coach will be replaced if he's not winning," said Turner.

"Obviously, you know that."

He smiled, though not because it was funny.

Bill Callahan's teams won more than they lost. But last season's 5-7 record included some humiliating losses that indisputably indicated the program wasn't headed in the right direction. So Athletic Director Tom Osborne made a change.

Though change is typically painful, "I think all the guys are liking the change," Turner said. "It's a great spirit going around in the locker room. Everybody's ready to focus on the upcoming year, and working hard."

The locker room spirit wasn't great by the end of last season. "The coaches, they always wanted to keep it a positive environment, but when you're losing, it's hard to keep everybody focused and looking at the goal," said Turner.

Nobody quit working. Players stuck together as best they could. But their confidence was shaken. The swagger that once characterized Nebraska was gone.

"Most definitely, you've got to have confidence in yourself," he said. "You've got to have swagger, a certain swagger to be able to play the game."

Turner brought that swagger from Brentwood Academy in Antioch, Tenn. He earned all-state recognition and was a finalist for Tennessee's Mr. Football as a senior. The teams on which he played, in basketball as well as football, were successful.

He never had to deal with losing until last season. His freshman year, the Cornhuskers were 8-4 and defeated Michigan in the Alamo Bowl. His sophomore year, they were 9-5 and won the Big 12's north division. "It's a long

BARRY TURNER AT A GLANCE

Year	G/GS	UT	AT	TT	TFL	Sacks
2005	12/0	13	1	14	8-41	6-46
2006	14/0	11	7	18	4-12	1.5-11
2007	12/11	12	17	29	5-34	3-33
Totals	38/11	36	25	61	17-87	10.5-90

season when you're losing. It's not fun at all," he said. "A lot of problems are caused on and off the field just because of losing. So I don't want to go down that route again."

Turner is among seven returning defensive players who started last season's final game at Colorado, though sophomore cornerback Anthony Blue suffered a knee injury during winter conditioning and will miss spring drills.

The others are end Zach Potter, tackles Ty Steinkuhler and Ndamukong Suh, cornerback Armando Murillo and strong safety Larry Asante. Potter, Steinkuhler and Murillo also are seniors. The other seniors on defense are tackles Shukree Barfield and Kevin Dixon, end Clayton Sievers and linebacker Tyler Wortman.

Potter played as a true freshman, primarily on special teams. Steinkuhler, Sievers and Wortman have spent four years in the program, while Murillo, Barfield and Dixon are junior college transfers — last season was their first at Nebraska.

Leadership comes with being a senior, and Turner has accepted that responsibility. "For sure, I have to take that role," he said. "It's all a matter of what's best for the team, and if it takes for me to help out another guy to help the team, then I'll do it."

And he'll do it with words as well as by setting an example.

"It all depends on the player," he said. "Some guys can't take criticism as well as other guys. So you've got to be able to balance it out with different players."

Though he was listed at 245 pounds, Turner wasn't that heavy when he arrived at Nebraska as an eager freshman. He weighed "235, maybe 230 . . . probably less," he said. "I'd think less. I could just look at pictures when I go home, from my senior year in high school. Whoa, it's a big difference, how mature you are (now)."

"Guys, you always heard them talking in the locker room, 'It goes by fast.' And it's the truth. It seems like a year ago I was a freshman."

He expects to play at 255 to 260 pounds this season, with the speed and quickness that allowed him to get on the field immediately and record six sacks as a freshman.

Continued on Page 13

players who started the final game at Colorado. The others are wide receiver Nate Swift and linemen Jacob Hickman, Matt Slauson and Mike Huff. In addition, linemen Lydon Murtha and Andy Christensen were starters until being sidelined by injuries, Christensen in the third game. Christensen's status is uncertain after his suspension for an off-the-field incident in early March.

Ganz weighed as much as 207 during the off-season, the heaviest he's ever been. The expectation is he'll play at about that weight, 205 to 210. And that's fine with him. "It's going to be a long year, especially if I'm running more," he said.

The quarterback likely will run more out of a shotgun formation so the offense will be less predictable — the shotgun won't automatically mean pass.

That Nebraska offered Ganz a scholarship is ironic, not only because of his youthful interest in the Cornhuskers but also because if it hadn't, he probably would have gone to Eastern Michigan to play baseball. Wisconsin was interested in him as a football scholarship recruit but opted for another quarterback in suburban Chicago.

Things couldn't have worked out much better, unless, of course, he hadn't had to wait until his fourth year and an injury to Keller for an opportunity to play.

He's been disappointed but never discouraged. The lowest points were when Harrison Beck got the call after Zac Taylor was injured in the Kansas State game in 2005 and when Keller emerged as the starter from their competition last spring and in the fall.

"But I've never regretted coming here," Ganz said. "I wouldn't give up playing at Nebraska to start three years (somewhere else). It's a tremendous honor."

Restoring tradition has been an underlying theme since Tom Osborne returned as athletic director. And Bo Pelini has emphasized the importance of tradition. Pelini's

emphasis hasn't been just with words. His actions have spoken even louder.

Not every player appreciates Nebraska's tradition. But Ganz does. "You do have to have a sense of tradition here," he said. "Guys who don't have that sense of tradition are losing something. They need to start playing with that sense of tradition to uphold. That 'N' on the side of your helmet is very heavy when you start losing."

Osborne and Pelini have brought back former players, many of whom felt alienated the past four years. And Ganz sees the importance of their presence, too.

"It's been tough these last two years. You don't want to

let them down. They really want you to do well," he said.

"You don't want them to think any less of you."

Ganz is still new to all of the attention that goes with being the Cornhuskers' starting quarterback. He accepts what he considers that responsibility.

"It might be worse here than other places," he said. But he's had some good role models at Nebraska, including Zac Taylor, who was always accessible to fans and media, and Stuntz, even though he was never the starting quarterback, never a starter at any position.

"My first three years, nobody wanted to talk to me," said Ganz. "It could get to some people. But it's nice when people come up and

appreciate your work.

"It means a lot to a lot of players."

Following in a Cornhusker quarterback tradition that includes Frazier means a lot to him. "It's nice to be mentioned (in that tradition), by definition. But that's pretty much where it stops," Ganz said. "Those guys are legends."

"Hopefully, some day, some kid down the road will say, 'I watched Joe Ganz, growing up.' But the team has to be better. Nobody remembers who the quarterback was for a 5-7 team."

He wants that to change. And in changing it, "I want to play in a way that honors past players," he said. ■



Joe Ganz accounted for six touchdowns in the final game last season at Colorado. He ran for two touchdowns and threw for four. Ganz completed 31-of-58 for 484 yards but was intercepted three times in a 65-43 setback.

Turner/Defense

Continued from Page 11

He had three sacks among 29 tackles last season, and seven quarterback hurries.

He'll be working with his third position coach in four years. The first was John Blake, who recruited him. The second was Buddy Wyatt, who replaced Blake a year ago. John Papuchis is his coach now, although he expects both "J.P." and defensive coordinator Carl Pelini to work with the ends and interior linemen.

All of the new coaches are "cool," said Turner. "It's really a good coaching staff, always communicating, wanting to know how you're doing."

"I'm really looking forward to this next year."

He's been excited from the first time he met with Bo Pelini. As soon as Pelini returned from finishing his business at LSU, by coordinating the Tigers' defense in their national championship-game victory against Ohio State, he sat down with each player.

"I felt like that took a lot, just to know his time was minimal, he was recruiting and everything, and he took the time to talk to everybody," Turner said.

Though the years have passed quickly, he has learned a lot during his time at Nebraska. For example, "you've got to be able to adjust," he said. "When you get here, you understand it's a business, and you can't be upset with stuff you can't control."

Even so, football remains fun. "I don't know any other venue in the world where you can entertain 85,000 at one time. It's just exciting, electrifying," he said.

"It's demanding, for sure it's demanding, getting up in the morning at 5:30 to work out, when everybody else is sleeping. But I love it. Saturdays are priceless, I'm telling you. Very few get to go through it, get to wear that 'N' on



Barry Turner (99) is congratulated by fellow defensive end Zach Potter after Turner sacked Kansas State quarterback Josh Freeman for a 19-yard loss on the last play of the first half of Nebraska's 73-31 victory Nov. 10 in Lincoln.

their helmet."

Instead of going home, Turner planned to stay in Lincoln during the university's spring break to continue preparing for spring practice. And he plans to stay in Lincoln all summer, getting ready for his final collegiate season.

"I won't be home until, hopefully, I get paid one day," he said.

His long-term goal is to play professionally, of course. "That's the dream," he said. "You envision yourself on Sundays, just making plays."

First, however, he has to compete for the starting job he had last season. ■

Spring

Plenty of questions have to be answered in Bo Pelini's first spring. Probably the biggest is whether the defense can get back on track after being derailed last season. Here are five, in no particular order of significance.

Who will step in at center?

The offensive line should have experience and depth, except at center, where Brett Byford had 25 consecutive starts the past two seasons. Byford stepped in for an ailing Kurt Mann the second game of the 2006 season and never relinquished the job. Jordan Picou was listed second on the depth chart last season, and he's also gone.

With the shuffling of linemen that went on during Bill Callahan's four years, Picou wasn't necessarily the player to whom the coaches would have turned anyway, had Byford been sidelined for a significant length of time.

Junior Jacob Hickman, who started nine games at guard, likely will be a candidate to succeed Byford. Andy Christensen probably would have been, too. His indefinite suspension for an off-the-field incident further complicates the situation.

Matt Slauson, Mike Huff and Lydon Murtha all have at least 13 career starts. Jaivorio Burkes started three games as a true freshman after Murtha was sidelined by injury. And several other young players, among them Keith Williams, D.J. Jones and Mike Smith, were highly regarded by the previous coaching staff.



Jacob Hickman

Which redshirts will emerge?

This question has always been of interest during the spring, though there are fewer redshirts now than there once were. Callahan played a lot of freshmen, primarily on special teams. Last season, 11 true freshmen saw action, 10 of them scholarship recruits. Walk-on Thomas Grove was the other.

Even so, the spring roster includes 25 redshirted freshmen, 10 of them scholarship recruits and two of them going through their second spring at Nebraska: quarterback Patrick Witt and I-back Marcus Mendoza. The others are: defensive ends Jared Crick and William Yancy, wide

receiver Curenski Gilleylen, tight end Ryan Hill, offensive lineman Marcel Jones, defensive tackle Terrence Moore, linebacker Austin Stafford and cornerback Shawn Sullivan. Place-kicker Daniel Lee also redshirted in the fall after transferring from Vanderbilt. He'll be a senior in eligibility.

Oh yes, I-back Kenny Wilson is coming off an injury redshirt.

Can someone challenge Marlon Lucky?

Wilson, who missed last season because of a broken leg, was part of the Cornhuskers' four-man I-back committee in 2006, along with Lucky, Cody Glenn and Brandon Jackson, after transferring from Butler County (Kan.) Community College. He had 19 carries in back-to-back games against Troy and Southern California. After the USC game, it appeared he might be at the top of the list.

After the 2006 Iowa State game, Glenn appeared to be the guy. He rushed for 148 yards and two touchdowns against the Cyclones — his season's total was eight touchdowns. But Jackson emerged, and Lucky was I-back I-A.

Last season, with Jackson leaving early for the NFL, the job was Lucky's. Glenn, though his health wasn't in question, played in only five games. Lucky showcased his versatility rushing and receiving and, like Jackson, considered skipping his senior season in favor of the NFL draft. Obviously, the ball needs to be in his hands.

But don't forget Quentin Castille, Roy Helu, Jr. and Mendoza, who's coming off a redshirt. Castille, whose playing time as a true freshman was limited by fumble issues, was the team's second-leading rusher, with 343 yards and four touchdowns.

The Cornhuskers have plenty of I-backs, though in his one game as head coach, Pelini needed only one. Cory Ross broke the school record for carries in a game, 37, in the 17-3 victory against Michigan State in the 2003 Alamo Bowl game.

Who will play linebacker?

Competition at linebacker is wide-open. Corey McKeon, Bo Ruud, Steve Octavien and Lance Brandenburgh all completed their eligibility. Junior Phillip Dillard is the most experienced returning linebacker. He started twice last season.

The list of candidates includes



Phillip Dillard

Questions



Huskers Illustrated file photo

Versatile Marlon Lucky (5) and NU's cast of I-backs will run behind an offensive line — including seniors Lydon Murtha (76) and Matt Slauson (70) — that has depth and experience, except at center.

Tyler Wortman, Nick Covey, Major Culbert and Latravis Washington, all of whom saw some action last season — Washington as a true freshman. Linebackers Blake Lawrence and Thomas Grove saw limited action on special teams, also as true freshmen. Players could be moved, as well.

Pelini knows how to get the most out of linebackers, as evidenced by Demorrio Williams' success in 2003. Barrett Ruud, the Cornhuskers' career leader in tackles, benefited from a season in Pelini's system, too.

Will the Spring Game be sold out?

The athletic department is hoping the enthusiasm for Pelini's return will result in a sellout crowd for the Red-White intrasquad game on April 19. Nearly 41,000 tickets had been sold by the first week in March. Nebraska's

Spring Game attendance record of 63,416 was set in 2005, Callahan's second spring as coach.

BRIEFLY

● Graduate assistant Jon Osterhout has left to become the defensive line coach at Sacramento State, where he played. His replacement was expected to be Ross Watson, a former All-American cornerback at NCAA Division III Mt. Union in Alliance, Ohio. The 24-year-old Watson also served as an assistant at Mt. Union.

● Appalachian State coach Jerry Moore, a former Cornhusker assistant (1973-78), will be among the featured speakers at Nebraska's spring coaches clinic April 3-5. Moore's teams have won three consecutive NCAA Division I-AA championships. Nebraska Athletic Director Tom Osborne also will be a featured speaker at the clinic, as will the coaches of the state's six high school championship teams in 2007. ■

2008 SPRING ROSTER

Source: Huskers.com

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown (school)		29	Lee, Daniel	PK	6-0	195	Sr.	Kansas City, Mo. (Park Hill South/Vanderbilt)
95	Allen, Pierre	DE	6-5	265	So.	Denver, Colo. (Thomas Jefferson)		3	Lee, Zac	QB	6-2	210	So.	San Francisco, Calif. (St. Ignatius Prep/San Francisco CC)
21	Amukamara, Prince	CB	6-1	180	So.	Glendale, Ariz. (Apollo)		48	Legate, Tyler	FB	5-10	215	So.	Neligh, Neb. (Neligh-Oakdale)
4	Asante, Larry	S	6-1	210	Jr.	Alexandria, Va. (Hayfield/Coffeyville Community College)		88	Lester, Ben	WR	5-10	160	RFr.	Tecumseh, Neb.
56	Barfield, Shukree	DT	6-4	310	Sr.	Camden, N.J. (Garden City CC)		75	Lingenfelter, Luke	DE	6-4	240	RFr.	Plainview, Neb.
66	Barrett, Cruz	OL	6-4	325	So.	Daytona Beach, Fla. (Mainland)		5	Lucky, Marlon	IB	6-0	210	Sr.	North Hollywood, Calif.
56	Baumgartner, Justin	LS	6-2	255	Sr.	Cheyenne, Wyo. (Chadron St./Laramie County CC)		45	Makovicka, Justin	FB	6-1	235	So.	Ulysses, Neb. (East Butler)
57	Bergland, Dennis	OL	6-1	290	So.	Plattsmouth, Neb.		63	Martin, Ben	DL	6-4	270	So.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)
14	Blue, Anthony	CB	5-10	175	So.	Cedar Hill, Texas		59	Martin, Jay	LB	6-2	210	RFr.	Waverly, Neb.
1	Brooks, Chris	WR	6-2	210	Jr.	St. Louis, Mo. (Hazelwood E.)		71	Masin, Mike	OL	6-6	320	RFr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southeast)
72	Burkes, Jaijorio	OL	6-5	315	So.	Phoenix, Ariz. (Moon Valley)		36	May, Matthew	S	6-1	195	RFr.	Imperial, Neb. (Chase County)
82	Cammack, Wes	WR	5-11	185	Jr.	DeWitt, Neb. (Tri County)		44	McNeill, Mike	TE	6-4	225	So.	Kirkwood, Mo.
58	Caputo, Mike	C	6-1	265	RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North)		32	Mendoza, Marcus	IB	5-10	185	RFr.	Houston, Texas (Spring Woods)
8	Cassidy, Austin	S	6-1	205	RFr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)		38	Moore, Kyle	LB	6-2	225	So.	Elkhorn, Neb.
19	Castille, Quentin	IB	6-1	245	So.	La Porte, Texas		90	Moore, Terrence	DT	6-3	275	RFr.	New Orleans, La. (McDonogh)
62	Christensen, Andy	OL	6-3	305	Sr.	Bennington, Neb.		5	Murillo, Armando	CB	6-0	195	Sr.	Tampa, Fla. (Robinson/Eastern Arizona Community College)
31	Covey, Nick	LB	6-2	240	Jr.	Glendale, Ariz. (Mountain Ridge)		76	Murtha, Lydon	OL	6-7	310	Sr.	Hutchinson, Minn.
94	Crick, Jared	DE	6-6	260	RFr.	Cozad, Neb.		33	O'Hanlon, Matt	S	5-11	200	Sr.	Bellevue, Neb. (East)
6	Culbert, Major	IB	6-0	210	Jr.	Harbor City, Calif. (Narbonne)		82	O'Leary, T.J.	LS	6-1	245	Sr.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North/New Mexico State)
15	Davis, Beau	QB	6-4	180	Sr.	Venice, Calif.		24	Paul, Niles	WR	6-1	210	So.	Omaha, Neb. (North)
52	Dillard, Phillip	LB	6-1	250	Jr.	Tulsa, Okla. (Jenks)		17	Peterson, Todd	WR	6-4	210	Sr.	Grand Island, Neb. (Cent. Cath.)
97	Dixon, Kevin	DT	6-3	295	Sr.	Sebring, Fla. (Garden City CC)		98	Potter, Zach	DE	6-7	285	Sr.	Omaha, Neb. (Creighton Prep)
83	Donahue, Matt	WR	6-2	175	So.	Fremont, Neb.		84	Rucker, Xavier	WR	5-6	160	So.	Minneapolis, Minn. (Breck)
16	Ebke, Jim	QB	6-0	210	So.	Lincoln, Neb. (East)		89	Santin, Jonathon	DE	6-3	235	RFr.	Fullerton, Neb.
74	Escamilla, Taylor	DL	6-1	275	RFr.	Fremont, Neb. (Bergan)		57	Sayre, Jeff	LB	6-3	210	RFr.	Barrington, Ill.
92	Fahie, Tyrone	DL	6-3	260	RFr.	Va. Beach, Va. (Ocean Lakes)		88	Sievers, Clayton	DE	6-4	260	Sr.	Elkhorn, Neb.
27	Ford, Ryan	CB	5-11	175	So.	Winfield, Ala.		70	Slauson, Matt	OL	6-5	335	Sr.	Colorado Springs, Colo. (Air Force Prep)
12	Ganz, Joe	QB	6-1	200	Sr.	Palos Heights, Ill. (Stagg)		65	Smith, Mike	OL	6-6	290	So.	Las Vegas, Nev. (Palo Verde)
41	Gillaspie, Aaron	FB	6-1	235	So.	Littleton, Colo.		7	Spano, Kody	QB	6-2	205	Fr.	Stepenville, Texas
11	Gillylen, Curenski	WR	6-0	210	RFr.	Leander, Texas		35	Stafford, Austin	LB	6-2	205	RFr.	Hayward, Calif.
34	Glenn, Cody	IB	6-0	230	Sr.	Rusk, Texas		43	Steinkuhler, Ty	DT	6-3	285	Sr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)
41	Grove, Thomas	LB	6-2	210	So.	Arlington, Neb.		93	Suh, Ndamukong	DT	6-4	305	Jr.	Portland, Ore. (Grant)
28	Hagg, Eric	S	6-1	195	So.	Peoria, Ariz. (Ironwood)		18	Sullivan, Shawn	CB	5-10	190	RFr.	Brenham, Texas
80	Harvey, David	DE	6-4	255	Jr.	La Plata, Md. (McDonough)		87	Swift, Nate	WR	6-2	200	Sr.	Hutchinson, Minn.
30	Hays, Mike	FB	6-1	210	RFr.	Papillion, Neb. (Papio-LaVista)		46	Tasa, Ben	TE	6-4	230	So.	Humphrey, Neb. (St. Francis)
10	Helu, Roy	RB	6-0	210	So.	Danville, Calif. (San Ramon Valley)		89	Teafatiller, Hunter	TE	6-3	230	Sr.	Kingsburg, Calif. (San Joaquin)
90	Henery, Alex	P	6-2	170	So.	Omaha, NE (Burke)		3	Thenarse, Rickey	S	6-0	190	Jr.	Los Angeles, Calif. (Jordan)
8	Henry, Will	WR	6-5	210	So.	El Paso, Texas (J.M. Hanks)		37	Thomsen, Kevin	FB	6-2	245	RFr.	Elkhorn, Neb.
85	Hetzer, Tyson	TE	6-6	245	Jr.	Redding, Calif. (Anderson/Citrus College)		39	Thorell, Lance	WR	6-1	180	RFr.	Loomis, Neb.
67	Hickman, Jacob	OL	6-4	285	Jr.	Bakersfield, Calif. (Centennial)		97	Titchener, Dan	P	6-0	200	Sr.	Cheyenne, Wyo. (East)
80	Hill, Ryan	TE	6-3	230	RFr.	Arvada, Colo. (West)		99	Turner, Barry	DE	6-3	265	Sr.	Antioch, Tenn. (Brentwood Acad.)
4	Holt, Menelik	WR	6-4	215	Jr.	San Diego, Calif. (St. Augustine)		23	Washington, Latravis	LB	6-3	210	So.	Bradenton, Fla. (Bayshore)
61	Huff, Mike	OL	6-4	300	Sr.	Ralston, Neb.		24	Watson, Adam	S	6-0	185	So.	Lincoln, Neb. (Niwot, Colo.)
69	Iske, Cory	OL	6-4	275	Fr.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard West)		37	Wesch, Jake	PK	6-1	200	Sr.	North Bend, Neb.
91	Jensen, Seth	DT	6-3	295	So.	Fort Morgan, Colo.		22	West, Anthony	CB	6-0	195	So.	San Diego, Calif. (Point Loma)
31	Jones, Austin	LCB	5-10	200	RFr.			68	Williams, Keith	OL	6-5	310	So.	Florissant, Mo. (McClure North)
73	Jones, D.J.	OL	6-5	310	So.	Omaha, Neb. (Central)		27	Wilson, Kenny	IB	6-0	220	Sr.	Liberal, Kan. (Butler County CC)
78	Jones, Marcel	OL	6-7	300	RFr.	Phoenix, Ariz. (Trevor Browne)		2	Witt, Patrick	QB	6-4	220	RFr.	Wylie, Texas
54	Koehler, Colton	LB	6-1	230	Jr.	Harvard, Neb. (Neb. Wesleyan)		53	Wortman, Tyler	LB	6-3	230	Sr.	Grand Island, Neb. (Cent. Cath.)
20	Kunalic, Adi	PK	6-0	175	So.	Fort Worth, Texas (North Crowley)		47	Yancy, William	DE	6-4	230	RFr.	Glendale, Ariz. (Ironwood)
12	Lawrence, Blake	LB	6-2	220	So.	Shawnee, Kan. (Shawnee Mission West)		49	Young, Drew	TE	6-4	220	So.	Cozad, Neb.
36	Lawson, Thomas	FB	6-0	240	Sr.	Parker, Colo. (Ponderosa)								

RECRUITING

Close to Home

Son of ex-Husker is first commitment of 2009 recruiting class

By Rick Shaw

It's too early to say whether or not the Nebraska in-state recruiting pool for 2009 will match up to the highly regarded group of 2008. However, it's off to a good start. By early March, four junior football players from the state already had received scholarship offers from Division I programs, and one of those prospects already had announced his college commitment.

Last year, 10 Nebraska high school football players received Division I offers, and all 10 signed with BCS Conference schools in February. Of that group, six chose Nebraska. Two of the ten, Baker Steinkuhler (Nebraska) and Trevor Robinson (Notre Dame), participated in the U.S. Army High School All-American Game in San Antonio in early January and were considered among the nation's top 100 recruits.

It's going to be tough to catch that group, but hometown defensive line prospect Cole Pensick got the ball rolling by delivering his pledge to Husker coaches in mid-January. The 6-foot-2, 250-pound prospect out of Lincoln Northeast High School became the first Nebraska pledge for the recruiting class of 2009.

Pensick earned first-team all-state honors as a junior, racking up 39 tackles, seven tackles for loss and three sacks. With a 4.97-second 40-yard dash to his credit and a 360-pound bench max, the blue-chipper out of Lincoln already possesses some of the necessary physical traits to become a quick contributor for the Huskers.

"I always wanted to be a Husker," Pensick said. "It was an easy choice. The staff, with the strength coach and Coach (Bo) Pelini, they're just so energetic. They take the



Cole Pensick, a defensive lineman from Lincoln Northeast High School, was the first commitment to the 2009 recruiting class. His father, Dan, earned three letters (1977-79) at Nebraska.

job seriously, but yet they're laid back. I just thought Bo was a great guy."

Northeast coach Dave Svehla said Pensick generated a great deal of interest from other schools across the country before committing to Nebraska.

"I think Cole was enjoying the process," Svehla said about Pensick's recruitment before picking up the offer from the Huskers. "Kansas, Kansas State, Iowa State, and

NEBRASKA COMMITMENTS FOR 2009

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	40	Hometown (School)
Cole Pensick	DT	6-2	250	4.97	Lincoln, Neb. (Northeast)

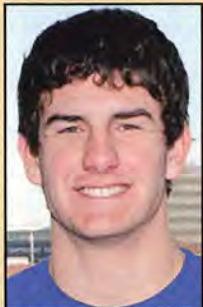
For more daily recruiting information, visit HuskersIllustrated.com, a member of the Rivals.com network.

RECRUITING NOTES

NU Targeting Quarterbacks

By Sean Stevens

The key to a strong start in recruiting seems to be to get a quarterback commitment early in the recruiting cycle. Nebraska has used a strategy in recent years of offering quarterbacks early in the cycle and getting a commitment before the season begins. Players like Harrison Beck and Blaine Gabbert, although they didn't end up as Huskers, helped jump-start strong recruiting classes. Will that be the case with the new coaching staff? Let's take a look at who the Huskers have targeted at this early point in the cycle.



Ryan Mossakowski

● Texas is a state of emphasis for the Husker staff, and it already has identified some top quarterback targets in the Lone Star State. Ryan Mossakowski (6-4, 201, 4 stars) of Frisco, Texas, is at the top of the Texas wish list right now.

A starter since his freshman year, Mossakowski has written offers from Auburn, Kansas, and Arizona, along with the Huskers. In his three seasons as a starter at Frisco, he has thrown for 5,995 yards and 36 touchdowns, with 27 interceptions, while rushing for 596 yards and 18 touchdowns for the young Centennial High School program. Rivals.com lists him as the No. 54-ranked player at all positions in the class of 2009.

Offensive coordinator/quarterback coach Shawn Watson is handling Mossakowski's recruitment for Nebraska.

"I talked to coach Watson," said Mossakowski. "He offered me a full ride on the phone. Coach Watson wrote me a pretty long letter. He sent me two in a week. He said that he was looking forward to talking to me and getting to know me."

● Kevin Newsome (6-3, 210) of Chesapeake, Va., is another highly ranked prospect NU has targeted. He already lists Penn State, Virginia Tech, Illinois and West Virginia among his 15 written offers.

He said that the Nebraska offer caught him off-guard. "You know, they're a legendary school," Newsome said. "They have a new coach, Coach (Bo) Pelini. I didn't expect Nebraska to offer."

Newsome is a well-rounded athlete and student. On the field, he threw for 1,500 yards and ran for 600 in leading his team to a 10-2 record last fall. He's also a state champion hurdler and a member of the national honor society and president of his junior class.

● Clayton Moore (6-1, 205) of Louisville, Miss., also sports a Nebraska offer, along with one from Southern Mississippi. Moore brings a 4.7-second 40-yard dash along with a strong arm. As a junior, he threw for more than 3,000 yards and 30 touchdowns, while rushing for 844 yards and 10 scores.

"I will tell you, it was an honor when I got an offer from them," Moore said. "I talked to Coach Watson. He told me that right after watching the highlight video, he signed the scholarship paper and sent it in the mail."

● Other prospects to watch are Morgan Newton (6-4, 205, 4 stars) of Carmel, Ind., Nathan Scheelhaase (6-2, 181) of Kansas City, Mo., Ryan Brehaut (6-2, 205) of Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., and Eric Anderson (6-4, 190) of Highlands Ranch, Colo. ■

Alabama — lots of schools were contacting us on a regular basis. Stanford came to the school and visited. I think Cole was adamant about keeping his options open.

"But, deep down, he was thinking 'if I get an offer here (Nebraska), this is where I'm going to go. He didn't want to just go to Nebraska simply because his dad went to Nebraska. I think he enjoyed the process, but I also think that now he's exactly where he wants to be. For him, it isn't about taking a recruiting trip to Stanford or taking a trip here. He got offered by the place he wanted to play at, and he's very content with that."

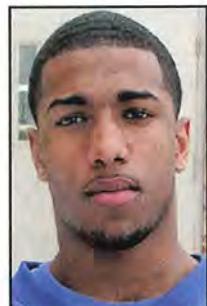
Pensick's father, Dan Pensick, played defensive tackle for NU in the late 1970s.

The Iowa Hawkeyes extended receiver Vondrae Tostenson of Millard South High School in Omaha his first Division I scholarship offer late last year (November). Though Nebraska has yet to formally throw their hat in the ring for this potential superstar, they, as well as a number of other schools, are already in frequent contact.

Tostenson injured his knee in 2007 and missed much of his junior season. This came after the 6-4, 210-pound receiver with 4.5-second speed in the 40-yard dash hauled in 19 passes for 387 yards (20.4 yards per catch) and seven scores as a sophomore. He caught 22 passes for 450 yards (20.5 yards per catch) and six touchdowns as a freshman.

According to Millard South coach Andy Means, the college football world is well aware of Tostenson's potential. In addition to the offer from Iowa, his star pupil has also been getting steady mail from Florida, Florida State, Kansas, LSU, Nebraska, Notre Dame, Ohio State and Oregon.

"They haven't seen him play because except for his sophomore year, I've got one game to show them," Means said. "I think they're kind of waiting to see school-wise how it works out and what he does this season. Obviously, if he goes down to some of those camps, sum-



Vondrae Tostenson

mer camps, if his knee is healthy — that will get him some attention."

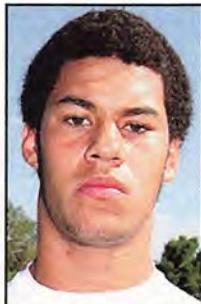
Tight end/defensive end prospect Tyrone Sellers already holds scholarship offers from Kansas, Kansas State and Wyoming and is getting steady attention from Iowa, Iowa State, Nebraska and Connecticut. The 6-3, 215-pound athlete from McCook said he hopes to add to his offer total after attending some camps this summer.

"I don't have any specific favorites," Sellers said. "I would like to hear more from Nebraska, sure, but other schools are also right up there."

Sellers was a first-team all-state pick as a junior, tallying 235 yards and six touchdowns on receptions from his tight end position. He also recorded 85 tackles, including 18 tackles for loss and eight sacks, from his defensive end spot.

McCook coach Jerry Gross said Sellers has the potential be a real difference-maker on offense in college but said his passion for defense will likely land him on the opposite side of the ball.

"His speed has been there (4.57 40), his size has been there, but his physi-



Tyrone Sellers



Jon Lechner

cality has only continued to get better as he's developed and become more of a technician," Gross said. "So what I'm looking for from him as a senior, besides just being a speed guy, is utilizing him in one-on-one mismatches at tight end, one-on-one mismatches at defensive end and force people to run away from him.

"I would love to see him play tight end at the next level because I think he can be a game-changer at that position. He has so much room to grow, but there is just such a passion to play defense, and he wants to play defensive end."

Offensive tackle Jon Lechner out of Creighton Prep became the fourth in-

state prospect to garner a Division I offer when Wisconsin extended a grant to him in late February. The 6-5, 310-pound big man may very well be the top offensive line prospect in the state heading into the 2008 season.

Besides Wisconsin, Lechner said he also talks regularly with coaches from Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri and Vanderbilt. He was also in Lincoln in February to attend Nebraska's junior day, where he visited with the new Husker coaching staff for the first time.

"Oklahoma and Nebraska are still my main priorities for camp this summer," Lechner said. "I'm hoping this offer from Wisconsin will open the door for more schools to come in."

The state of Nebraska has a long way to go to match the overall talent level of the players who formed the in-state recruiting class of 2008. However, with Pensick, Tostenson and others, it appears as though the 2009 group is off to a good start. ■

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Aleks Maric (above) and Danielle Page (right), the only seniors on their respective teams, receive congratulations from their teammates. The

Senior M

***Controlling emotions
difficult for honorees
Maric, Page***

**By Mike Babcock
Photos by Scott Bruhn**

The experience was understandably emotional. Aleks Maric knew it would be.

That's why, in the locker room beforehand, he and his Nebraska basketball teammates "told each other to keep our emotions behind and try to be a man," he said.

But try as he might, he couldn't hold back the tears.

"A river started coming out of my



They were honored before their final regular-season home games March 5 and March 9 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Moments

eyes, actually," said Maric.

Four days earlier, Danielle Page shed tears for the same reason. She struggled to speak at the end of an interview following the Huskers' 55-45 victory against Iowa State at the Devaney Sports Center. "It's crazy . . . I can't . . . I'm getting all emotional," she said.

The occasion was her final home game at Nebraska, unless the Huskers were to play host to a first-round NCAA Tournament game. "That

would be nice," she said.

If that doesn't happen, however, her last game at the Sports Center was appropriately successful. She scored 11 points, grabbed five rebounds and blocked three shots to give the Huskers a 20th victory for a second consecutive season, and a 9-7 Big 12 record.

"Danielle has meant a lot to our program," coach Connie Yori said. "We were 1-15 in the league the year she committed to us. So nobody real-

ly wanted to come that year."

The year in question was Yori's first as Nebraska's head coach.

Page accepted the scholarship offer and has persevered through injuries and the frustration that every young athlete has to endure. "She's a great kid who's worked very hard, who's one of the hardest workers in our program," said Yori. "For her to finish off a career at home like we've done here the last couple of games, I think it's very meaningful for all of us."



Nebraska's seniors were joined by their parents during the ceremonies. Danielle Page (above) acknowledges the crowd, along with her parents Fred and Lynn Page. Aleks Maric (right) gets ready to enter the arena with his parents Stevan and Draginja Maric.

The same was true for Maric, whose final home game — also barring a postseason game at the Sports Center — was typically productive: 17 points, 16 rebounds, six assists, three steals and two blocked shots with no turnovers in a 68-49 victory against Colorado.

In addition to Athletic Director Tom Osborne presenting him with a framed No. 21 jersey, the pregame Senior Day ceremony included the playing of the Australian national anthem and the reading of a message from Maric's sisters and nephews in Australia.

His parents, Stevan and Draginja, were at his side.

Coming from Sydney, Australia, by way of Burlington (N.J.) Life Center was a "big step, especially as a young

teenager, leaving your parents behind, your family and friends," said Maric. "It's a risk, how a young teenager is going to react, adapt and cope with certain situations because there's a lot of adversity and diversity when you go overseas."

"When I was a small kid, I wished I could go to Spain or Italy to play soccer. I went the other way and came to America. But I do not regret that."

Cornhusker basketball fans don't regret his decision, either. He was introduced as "one of the greatest Huskers all-time," and when coach Doc Sadler took him out of the game with 2:03 remaining, he received a standing ovation from the crowd of 10,915.

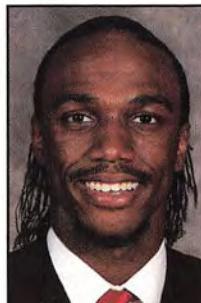




He had hugs and handshakes for all of his teammates and team support personnel, and even walked over to the Red Zone section along the baseline, where an Australian flag was prominently displayed, to say thanks.

FUN AT THE FAIR

When Cookie Miller entered the Colorado game in the second half, the outcome having long since been decided, Maric told him to have fun, pretend that he was at the West Virginia State Fair. Miller is from Charleston, W.V. "He



Cookie Miller

turned around and started laughing at me," Maric said. "I don't know if he thought it was funny or thought I was stupid."

NOT GOING TO BE BENCHED

Page's first points on Senior Night came on a 3-point shot. So did Maric's first points against Colorado. "I guess he probably thought, 'What's the guy going to do, take me out?'" Sadler said. Maric attempted two more 3-point shots, neither of which went in.

The made 3-pointer was his first of the season.

KNEW IT WOULD BE THAT WAY

Page expected the tears on Senior Night. Her parents were on hand from Monument, Colo., among a dozen or so



Aleks Maric fires away for his first 3-pointer of the season on Senior Night. He finished with 17 points, 16 rebounds, six assists, three steals and two blocked shots with no turnovers in a 68-49 victory against Colorado.

family members who came to Lincoln.

"I'm kind of emotional as it is," she said in advance of the game. "I cried on all previous three senior nights, so I'm not sure how I'm going to handle my own Senior Night."

SHOULD BE IN

The victory against Iowa State earned the Husker women the No. 6 seed in the Big 12 Tournament in Kansas City, Mo. They were slated to play Kansas in the first round. With 20 victories and a 9-7 record in the conference with the highest RPI, Yori anticipated her team's receiving an at-large bid in the NCAA Tournament, if the Huskers didn't win the conference tournament. "I think we can go there with nothing to lose," she said of the Big 12 tournament. "You can play relaxed. You don't have to be tight and think, 'Are we in or are we not in?'

"Again, I'm not on the selection committee, but obviously, I think this win gives us a very, very good chance to be in. I think you can go there and say, 'Hey, let's get one, improve our seeding. Let's see if we can get two, if we can get one, and then go from there.' "

POSTSEASON POSSIBILITY FOR THE MEN, TOO

The Cornhusker men were scheduled to play Missouri as the No. 7 seed in the opening round of the conference tournament, which they had to win in order to advance to the NCAA Tournament with an automatic bid. But with the victory against Colorado they had a realistic chance of playing in either the National Invitation Tournament or the first-year College Basketball Invitational. "They haven't called me, but if my opinion mattered, we would be (in a post-season tournament)," Sadler said. "But that's something we can't control."

STRONG FINISH

After starting conference play with four losses, Sadler's team regrouped to win seven of its final 12 games, to finish 7-9. "I think that speaks highly of the character of this basketball team; 0-4 could put a lot of doubt in your mind," Sadler said. It could put a lot of doubt in my mind, in the players' minds. We just continued to work hard. I don't know that many teams out there could do what we did. And that's a credit to the kids and what they did, in my opinion." ■

MEN'S RESULTS

Overall: 18-11/Big 12: 7-9		
Nov. 10	Presbyterian College	W 67-52
Nov. 17	Alabama A&M	W 59-42
Nov. 20	Norfolk State	W 83-48
Nov. 24	@Creighton	L 74-62
Nov. 26	IPFW	W 79-62
Dec. 2	Arizona State	W 62-47
Dec. 5	@Western Kentucky	L 69-62 (ot)
Dec. 9	Rutgers	W 63-51
Dec. 11	Savannah State	W 82-37
Dec. 15	Oregon (Qwest Center, Omaha)	W 88-79 (ot)
Dec. 22	North Carolina Central	W 71-28
Dec. 29	Alcorn State	W 77-53
Jan. 4	Maryland-East. Shore	W 86-50
Jan. 12	Kansas	L 79-58
Jan. 15	@Colorado	L 55-51
Jan. 19	Baylor	L 72-70
Jan. 26	@Kansas	L 84-49
Jan. 30	@Missouri	W 66-62
Feb. 2	Iowa State	W 64-56
Feb. 6	@Kansas State	L 74-59
Feb. 9	Texas Tech	W 73-62
Feb. 13	Missouri	L 86-78 (ot)
Feb. 16	@Iowa State	L 60-52
Feb. 20	Kansas State	W 71-64
Feb. 23	@Texas A&M	W 65-59
Feb. 27	Oklahoma	W 63-45
Mar. 1	@Oklahoma State	L 77-63
Mar. 4	@Texas	L 70-66
Mar. 9	Colorado	W 68-49
Mar. 13	*Missouri	
*Big 12 Tournament, Kansas City		

WOMEN'S RESULTS

Overall: 20-11/Big 12: 9-7		
Nov. 9	UTEP	W 81-74
Nov. 11	Mississippi	W 80-59
Nov. 17	Florida,	W 90-63
Nov. 23	*Marist	L 66-59
Nov. 24	*Utah	L 56-44
Nov. 25	*Akron	W 75-47
Nov. 30	Creighton	W 79-65
Dec. 2	Robert Morris	W 73-58
Dec. 8	USC	W 87-69
Dec. 13	@Cal State Bakersfield	W 66-62
Dec. 15	@Long Beach State	W 75-52
Dec. 22	@Ohio State	L 86-74
Dec. 30	Denver	W 73-38
Jan. 2	Arkansas-Pine Bluff	W 67-39
Jan. 9	Texas	W 56-45
Jan. 12	Kansas	W 71-51
Jan. 16	@Oklahoma	L 80-72
Jan. 19	@Iowa State	W 82-72
Jan. 23	Texas A&M	W 73-60
Jan. 26	@Baylor	L 76-56
Jan. 30	Kansas State	L 77-75
Feb. 3	@Missouri	W 73-67
Feb. 6	@Colorado	W 80-71
Feb. 10	Oklahoma State	L 92-81
Feb. 17	@Kansas	L 62-61
Feb. 21	Missouri	W 73-57
Feb. 24	@Texas Tech	L 65-56
Feb. 27	@Kansas State	L 69-65
Mar. 2	Colorado	W 63-55
Mar. 5	Iowa State	W 55-45
Mar. 11	**Kansas	L 73-67
*Oahu Classic		
**Big 12 Tournament, Kansas City		

BASEBALL



Coach Mike Anderson waves Bryce Nimmo home during the second game of Nebraska's 10-4, 5-2 sweep of UC Riverside March 1.



NU right fielder DJ Belfonte just misses on a diving catch attempt against Nebraska-Kearney. The Huskers won 11-2.

'A Pretty Quick Recovery'

Nebraska catcher Abeita not one to dwell on the past

By Mike Babcock

Setback? Mitch Abeita wouldn't describe it that way.

"I was just fortunate it wasn't any worse than it was," he said. "I mean, much further up or down on my leg, and it would have been a serious injury."

"But thank God it wasn't."

The injury to which Abeita referred was a broken right fibula, suffered during Nebraska's second game in last season's Big 12 Tournament.

He was catching, blocking home plate, when Kansas State's Jordan Cruz slid into him attempting to break up a double play. Whether the slide was just hard or an attempt to injure was a subject of debate, resulting in the immediate ejection of Cornhusker coach Mike Anderson as well as an assistant. And another assistant and two players were subsequently ejected in the 5-1 loss against the Wildcats.

In either case, the result was the same, the broken fibula, though the break wasn't diagnosed until a week later. X-rays the morning after the game didn't reveal the break. So when the team returned to Lincoln, Abeita continued to practice in preparation for the NCAA regional at Tempe, Ariz. — or at least he tried to practice.

He couldn't run and couldn't walk without limping, prompting a further look at x-rays. The day before the team left for Tempe, he learned of the break.

At that point, his concern was making the trip with the team. He hurried to Anderson's office to ask if he could still go. Anderson told him he could. Had Anderson said no . . . "I don't even want to think about it," said Abeita.

In fact, Abeita would rather not think about the injury now. He's not one to dwell on the past. "For me, it just helps to look forward, never look backward, look forward to getting better and picturing myself back on the field again."

That's what motivated him following the injury.

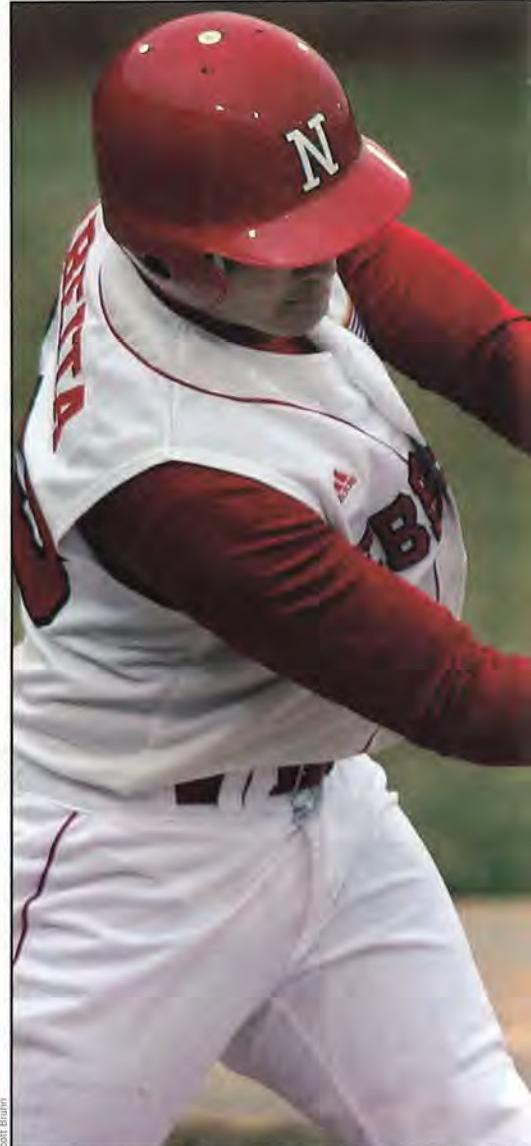
"I had a pretty quick recovery," he said. "I was fortunate."

By the end of the summer, he was in Wisconsin, playing in the Northwoods League, as a designated hitter but also as a catcher. He was able to work his way back by constant running. He would run before games and stay after to run some more.

Abeita continued to move forward during Nebraska's fall practice, hitting .364 in scrimmages. He picked up where he left off when the injury occurred. In his final 14 games last season, he batted .357 with four doubles and six runs-batted in.

Likewise, his success in the fall has carried over this spring.

Abeita, who is from Duncanville, Texas, is much more comfortable at Nebraska now than he was a year ago. He transferred from North Central Texas College in Gainesville, Texas. And that required a significant adjustment in itself.



Senior catcher Mitch Abeita, who had just one home run in 46 games in 2007, hit three in Nebraska's first six games this season.

"I understand the way things are supposed to be run more than I did when I first got here," he said. "You've got to feel your situation out. The time helped."

"It's not just baseball, school, baseball, school, go to bed. There's a lot more to it. I had to learn to be more organized and more punctual with my time."

Some adjustments weren't too difficult, of course, such as playing at Hawks Field. The ball field at North

ck Recovery'



Mitch Abeita

BASEBALL NOTES

TEZAK OUT

Senior Jeff Tezak, who started the first seven games as the designated hitter, has been lost for the season because of a knee injury that required surgery. Tezak was second-team all-conference as a designated hitter last season, batting .335 with three home runs and 37 runs-batted-in. He will apply for a medical hardship. Tezak was batting fourth in the order. Mitch Abeita, who was batting fifth or sixth, replaced him.

RARE OCCURRENCE

Abeita's pinch-hit home run against UC-Riverside on March 1 was the first by a Cornhusker pinch-hitter since May 13, 2005, when Jake Opitz hit one at Texas Tech. Abeita's pinch-hit home run was the first-ever at Hawks Field and only the third by a Cornhusker this decade. Dan Johnson hit the other on May 29, 2000.

IMPRESSIVE DEBUT

Junior Aaron Pribanic pitched a complete-game 13-1 victory against UC-Riverside on March 2. The start was his first at Nebraska. The last Cornhusker to pitch a complete game in his first start was Aaron Marsden in 2002.

Both games were shortened by a run rule. Pribanic went seven innings, allowing five hits, striking out five and walking two. The run was earned.

The 6-foot-4, 200-pound right-hander from Plano, Texas, by way of Hutchinson (Kan.) Community College also pitched a complete game in his second start, a 7-0 shutout of Northern Colorado, allowing five hits and striking out seven, with no walks. His earned-run average over 18.2 innings was 0.96.

FROSH START

Ben Kline, a freshman from Omaha, has stepped in at shortstop. He was the fourth true freshman to start a season-opener for coach Mike Anderson and just the eighth freshman at Nebraska to start an opener since 1999. The others were: DJ Belfonte (2007, RF), Ryan Wehrle (2005, 2B), Alex Gordon (2003, 3B), Joe Simokaitis (2002, SS), Matt Hopper (2000, DH), Will Bolt (1999, 2B) and Shane Komine (1999, P).

Hopper was a redshirted freshman. ■

Central Texas College was hard against a pasture stretching along the first base side. The pasture was fenced in with barbed wire. Foul balls that found their way amid the cattle, inside the fence, couldn't be retrieved.

Abeita began last season backing up Jeff Lanning but earned the starting job with his moving-forward approach and enthusiasm for a game he has played since he was small. He started 40 of 46 games and batted .286, with one home run and 20 RBIs to earn All-Big 12 honorable mention. He batted .303 and drove in 17 in con-

ference play.

He had already hit three home runs this season by the time the Cornhuskers were scheduled to open conference play at Kansas State. The power was simply a function of working hard to become a better hitter, he said. "I'm just trying to do the job that Coach puts in front of me, that the team needs. So far, it's been the long ball."

Nebraska's offensive philosophy is having "nine guys that are really, really tough outs," he said. "The pitcher has no time to rest, to take a break. He's got nine guys that are going to

give him a hard time. So it really wears on the pitcher."

And when a pitcher wears down, he makes mistakes. No one understands that better than a catcher.

Abeita also has worked hard at getting to know Nebraska's young pitching staff. Each pitcher is unique, and has to be dealt with as such. "Not any pitcher is the same, pretty much," he said.

Sometimes, he tries to do too much. "I want to help as much as I can behind the plate," said Abeita. "But sometimes, you've got to let the guys go." ■



Jeff Tezak



Aaron Pribanic



Ben Kline

SOFTBALL



Nebraska outfielder Darcy Rutherford led the Huskers in on-base percentage and was second in stolen bases last season as a sophomore.

Now She Knows

Rutherford's confidence reflected in her attitude at bat
By Mike Babcock

Darcy Rutherford can probably appreciate the convoluted wisdom of baseball's Yogi Berra. The Hall of Fame catcher and manager is credited

with having said, in various versions: "Baseball is 90 percent mental. The other half is physical."

The same can be said of softball, as Rutherford understands now.

Two years ago, the Husker junior didn't understand. Until she walked on at Nebraska, she had never concerned herself with softball's mental side.

She had been successful because of her athleticism. She didn't have to think.

"In high school, you're the top dog," Rutherford said.

The dog image isn't accidental. She loves animals, big dogs in particular. Her mom has two, a Boxer and a Bloodhound. And her older sister has a Yellow Lab.

She wants to work with animals, someday. But that's another story.

Anyway, Rutherford was the top dog in softball at Omaha (Neb.) Central High School, a two-time, first-team all-state honoree, leading the Eagles to consecutive fourth-place finishes in Class A. She batted .447 as a senior, with 33 runs scored and 39 stolen bases. Her statistics were simi-

lar as a junior, including a .400 batting average.

She also played basketball but concentrated on softball her senior year because she loved softball more. "I love the atmosphere. I love playing outside. I love playing in the sun," she said, trying to explain a feeling that defies explanation.

"I love hitting. I love hitting the most."

She didn't do any hitting as a Husker freshman, except during practice. She got three at-bats in 25 games. She went 0-for-3, with three strikeouts.

Her primary role was as a pinch-runner. She has always been good at running the bases. And she's fast. But running wasn't enough to make her happy. As a result, her freshman season "wasn't what I anticipated at all," Rutherford said.

The biggest problem was not understanding the game's mental side and not believing in herself. "I was just in my head all the time," she said. "I wanted to succeed. I didn't want to fail. Thinking and telling yourself, 'Don't fail,' you're going to fail."

"Everybody goes through it. I put a lot of pressure on myself my freshman year. I was probably mostly scared. I would feel like I would always be the one who was making mistakes. I just felt like I was the person who needed to improve the most."

There were other factors, personal family issues and "not doing well in school," although she earned a place on the Big 12 Commissioner's Honor Roll. But she doesn't put the blame on those things. The matter was mostly one of mindset.

Before Christmas break a year ago, coach Rhonda Revelle called her into the office to commend her on the improvement she had made — and to tell her she would be getting scholarship aid from that point on. "It was cool," said Rutherford.

When she walked on, "I didn't really care if I got anything," she said.

Rutherford might have been the team's most improved player as a sophomore. She started 26 games in left field and batted .254, with a .375 on-base percentage and eight stolen bases in 11 attempts. The on-base percentage was a team high.

SOFTBALL NOTES



Molly Hill



Haley Long



Alex Hupp

WELCOME BACK

Junior pitcher Molly Hill, among 50 players on the watch list for the USA Softball National Player of the Year award, returned to action in the Leadoff Classic at Columbus, Ga., Feb. 20 through March 2. She went 1-2 in the tournament, pitching an 11-1, five-inning victory against Tennessee Tech in the first game.

Hill was sidelined by knee surgery in early February.

The Tennessee Tech victory was the 600th of Revelle's coaching career, including 594 at Nebraska.

ALL-TOURNAMENT

Junior Haley Long was named to the Leadoff Classic all-tournament team, hitting .385 with four runs-batted-in and a stolen base in the five games.

Long hit the first home run of her career — at any level — against Northwestern in the season-opening Kajikawa Classic at Tempe, Ariz.

NEAR PERFECT

Sophomore Alex Hupp pitched a six-inning, 8-0 no-hitter in the second game of a double-header sweep of Northern Colorado in Lincoln. Hupp was perfect through 4.1 innings before giving up a walk. Northern Colorado also had a baserunner in the sixth because of an error. Hupp struck out a career-high 12. The victory was her third in a row after starting the season 0-3. The no-hitter was the 34th in Husker history.

HOME AT LAST

The Huskers played their first 12 games away from home, in tournaments. They opened at home with back-to-back double-header sweeps of Northern Colorado on March 8-9. The games were believed to be the earliest played at home in the 33-year history of Nebraska's softball program. After the Northern Colorado series, the Huskers went back on the road. They weren't scheduled to return to Bowlin Stadium until March 29-30 for two conference games against Oklahoma. ■

She still wasn't where she wanted to be, however. "My mentality had come around just a little bit more," she said. "I realized that I'd been doing this all my life so why be scared to play? This is what I love. This is what I'm best at."

Had she come to that realization during her freshman year, "I wonder if it would have been different," Rutherford said. "But I can't go back."

The difference this season is dramatic. Her confidence is reflected in her attitude at bat. "Any pitcher they bring my way I'm ready to hit," she said.

Her mentality is "a thousand times better" than when she was a freshman. She has grown and matured, and she realizes she deserves to be where she is.

"I don't have to second-guess myself," she said. "That's what got

me in a hole my freshman and sophomore years. I was second-guessing myself all the time.

"You've got to be mentally strong to play this game. If you're not, it's going to break you down. I've realized that. I'm not going to get down on myself. I'm not going to let it get to my head. It's just going to screw me up down the road if I do."

That's what Berra was trying to say about baseball.

And that's what Revelle meant in a quote included with Rutherford's biography in the Husker softball media guide: "Darcy is an incredible athlete who has made many strides in knowing and trusting her athleticism. As her confidence has grown, so has her desire and focus in making herself the best she can be."

People told her as much when she walked on. But she had to learn for herself. ■

TRACK AND FIELD



Nebraska's Trey Jordan finished seventh in the shot put at the 2008 Big 12 Indoor Championships with a mark of 55-7 3/4.

Scott Brum

Impatient

Sophomore shot putter Jordan determined to reach his goal

By KATELYN KERKHOVE

There's a little thing called patience with which Trey Jordan finds difficult to deal. A goal-setter, Jordan came to the Nebraska track and field team this year determined to throw at least 60 feet in the shot put.

It hasn't happened yet. And Jordan is frustrated because he doesn't know why.

"I think, obviously, Nebraska is great with everything they have here with

academics, coaches and support," Jordan said. "There's really no reason for me not to accomplish those goals. I think the only thing I can blame is myself."

While Jordan searches for the answer, his coach Mark Colligan said it could be an injury he sustained before the season began.

Jordan never mentioned the injury as an excuse. Black and blue from his knee to his waist because of a strain in his upper quad and hamstring, Jordan wasn't sure he would even participate this season, Colligan said.

For that reason, Colligan said, the sophomore thrower "has done fairly well." Jordan threw 55-feet, 7 3/4-inches at the Big 12 Conference Championships in Lincoln on March 1 to finish in seventh place.

"He's a little bit high-strung," said Colligan. "He's bright and energetic but sometimes to a fault. Sometimes, patience is not his forte, so he needs to work on that a little bit. But he's got the raw enthusiasm it takes to be good at what he wants to be good at."

Jordan grew up in Troy, Texas. He was a three-time state champion in the shot put and threw a personal best of 62-8 1/2 to earn fifth place at the 2005 Nike Outdoor Nationals in Greensboro, N.C.

Much of his success, Jordan said, he owes to his dad, Earl.

While Earl wasn't his official coach in high school, Jordan listed him as such on his Nebraska bio. He said the two had "a lot of screaming matches back and forth," but working with his dad provided some of his best memories.

Earl — who threw for Sam Houston State in Huntsville, Texas — hasn't missed one track meet so far

this year, putting 6,000 miles on his car to drive from Texas to Nebraska nearly every weekend.

"I don't think I've been homesick," Jordan said. "It's nice every weekend to know that even if it's a bad weekend of throwing, you're going to be around people that will support you, regardless."

Earl Jordan's drives are much longer than they were a year ago. Trey spent his freshman year at Texas Christian University.

Trey was recruited by Nebraska out of high school, but at that point, he felt the distance was too far. After a rocky start at TCU, however, he decided he would feel more comfortable with the coaches at Nebraska — who had never lost faith in him.

"I felt like when he made a decision to go to another university that the decision had nothing to do negatively with UNL," Colligan said. "When he made that decision, I let him know that I felt like if he had a change of heart in the future, I wasn't going to burn any bridges. Sometimes, when you don't burn your bridges and you don't have expectations for the future, things

turn out in your favor."

Jordan said he's felt much more comfortable at Nebraska. Lincoln reminds him of home, especially the people. He said the athletes and students he's met have made him feel more than welcome.

Colligan said Jordan has done the same for other members of the Nebraska track and field team. "He's very outgoing, and I think that's been good for our team," Colligan said. "He does bridge a gap between the quieter members of the program. I think he's made a good adjustment to being in a different place. I think his goals are quite high, and that may be why he thinks he is struggling."

While he may not have reached his goals so far, Jordan said the season is far from over. He still has a couple months of the outdoor season to prove his worth, if only to himself.

"My dad thinks that I'm doing a great job," he said. "I don't know if that's just his job as a parent to tell me that, but I set goals for myself, and it doesn't matter if one person or another tells me that. If I don't reach those goals, then there's just something wrong." ■



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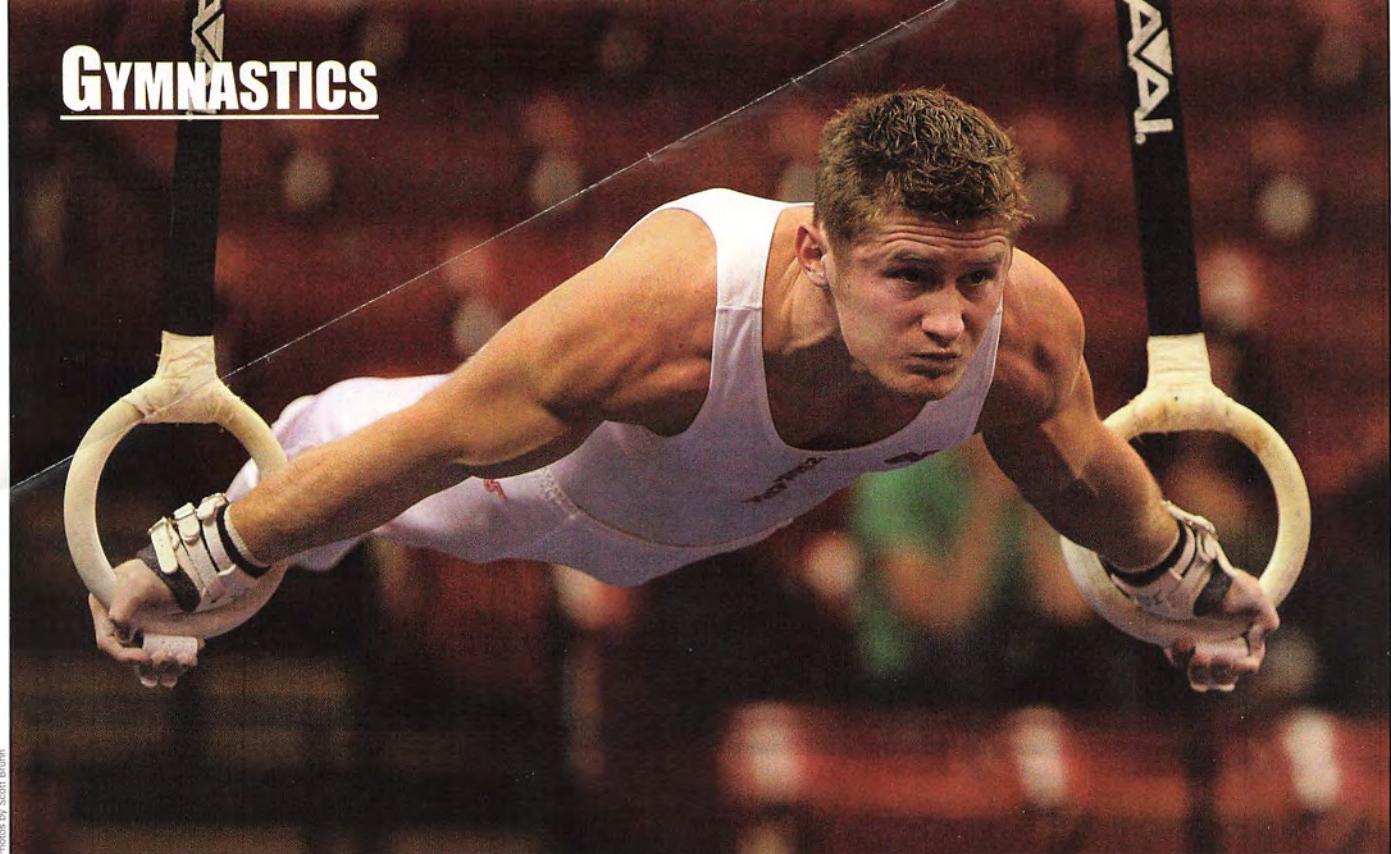


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GYMNASTICS

Photos by Scott Bjork



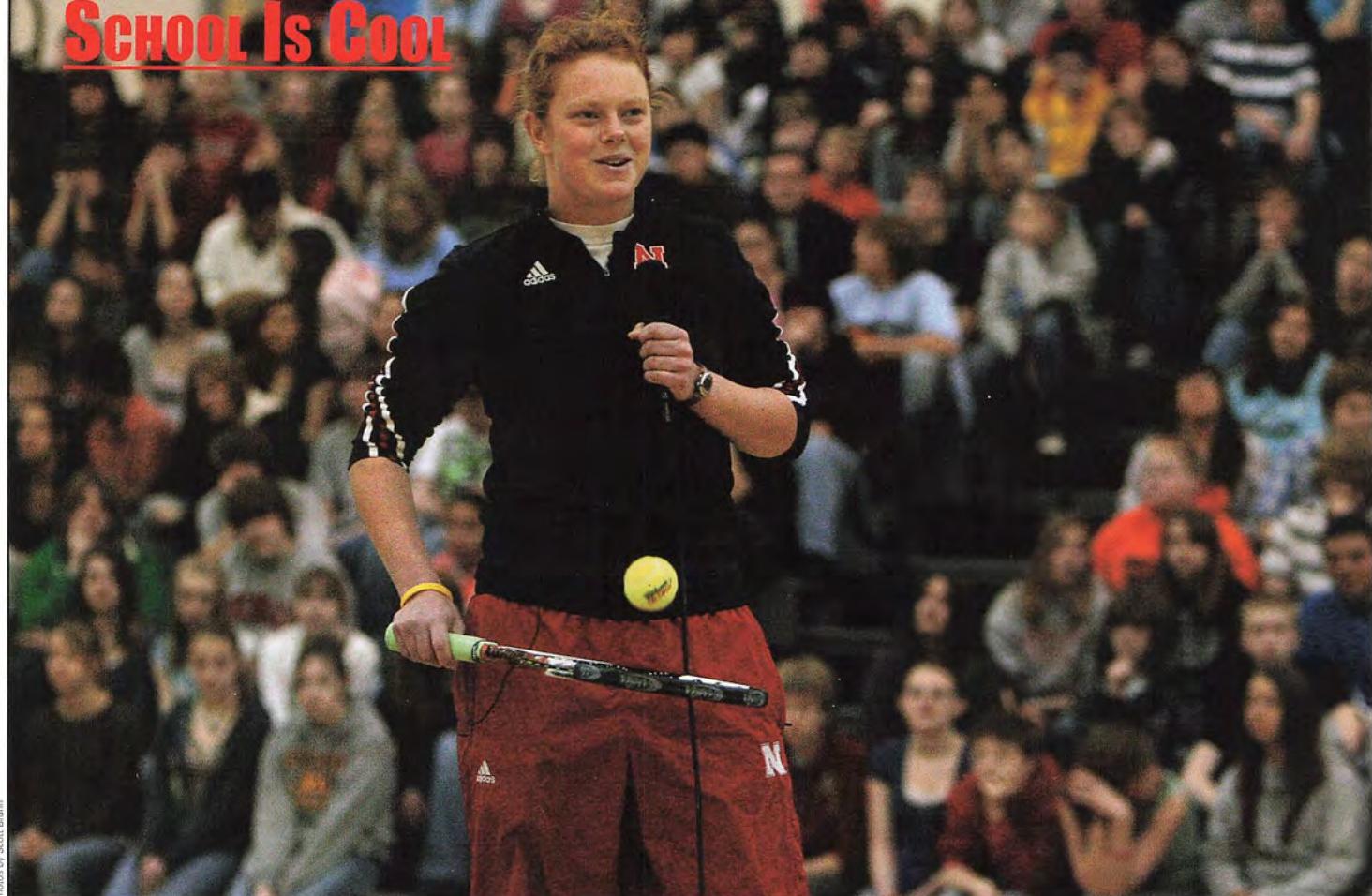
Sophomore Tony Maras earned his first still rings event title, posting a career-high 14.90 to tie for first in a meet against Stanford on Feb. 16 in Palo Alto, Calif.



Junior Tricia Woo, competing as an all-arounder for the first time in her career, finished third with a 39.25 as the No. 16 Nebraska women's gymnastics team posted a 196.05 to take second in a triangular with No. 9 Stanford and No. 6 Alabama March 7 in Palo Alto, Calif. Woo also captured event titles on beam and floor with a pair of 9.90s.

SCHOOL IS COOL

Photos by Scott Blum



Tennis player Imke Reimers (above) and volleyball player Tara Mueller (left) were among the Nebraska student-athletes sharing inspirational messages with approximately 2,300 Lincoln Public Schools eighth graders in the third annual "School is Cool" Celebration Feb. 18 at Lincoln Southwest High School. Former Huskers and current Houston Texans Kris Brown and Ahman Green sponsored the academic pep rally. Other NU student-athletes participating included Betsy Miller (cross country, track and field), Zarina Suluki-Drakes (track and field), Ryan Anderson (basketball) and Joe Ganz (football).

Just Two Points Short

Nebraska's young track and field teams both finished second at the Big 12 Indoor Championships at the Devaney Sports Center. The Husker men came up two points short of Texas, while the women were runners-up to Texas A&M.

Sheryl Morgan and Epley Bullock were Nebraska's only champions, Morgan in the 600, Bullock in the high jump. The Husker men's top finishers were runners-up Dusty Jonas in the high jump, Bubba Kramer in the shot put, Lehann Fourie in the 60-yard hurdles and Peter van der Westhuizen in the mile.

Nebraska's Natalie Willer (pole vault) Erin Hannon (high jump, tie) and Megan Wheatley (pentathlon) finished second in the women's competition.

TEAM SCORING

Men: Texas 106 points, Nebraska 104, Texas Tech 93, Texas A&M 76, Missouri 67, Oklahoma 65 1/2, Colorado 54, Kansas State 46, Baylor 38, Kansas 37 1/2, Iowa State 32, Oklahoma State 22.

Women: Texas A&M 119 1/4, Nebraska 95, Kansas 93, Texas 79, Texas Tech 70 1/2, Baylor 68 1/4, Oklahoma 59, Missouri 55, Kansas State 54, Iowa State 30, Oklahoma State 13, Colorado 5.

NEBRASKA SCORING

Men

Heptathlon: 4. Patrick Burke, 5505 points; 5. Skyler Reising, 5467.

High jump: 2. Dusty Jonas, 7-5; 4. Paul Hamilton, 6-11 3/4.

Pole vault: 3. Seth Burney, 17-3/4.

Long jump: 3. Nicholas Gordon, 24-9; 4. Jonas, 24-4 1/4.

Shot put: 2. Bubba Kramer, 57-5 1/2; 7. Trey Jordan, 55-7 3/4.

Weight throw: 6. Bryan Bell, 62-13/4.

60 hurdles: 2. Lehann Fourie, 7.82; 3. Tyrell Ross, 7.88.

60 dash: 3. Dax Danns, 6.72.

400: 3. Lukas Hulett, 47.35; 7. Dan Christensen, 48.18.

600: 5. Adam Dailey, 1:10.38; 6. Andrew Pearson, 1:10.74.

1000: 6. Ethan Luebbe, 2:31.32.

1600 relay: 4. (Christensen, Pearson, Danns, Hulett) 3:08.76.

Distance medley: 8. (Matt Conahan, Christensen, Blaise Rewaka, Kyle Custer) 10:09.67.

Women

Pentathlon: 2. Megan Wheatley, 3993; 3. Chantae McMillan, 3827, 5. Kim Shubert, 3767; 6. Erin Hannon, 3648; 7. Rachel Butler, 3603.

High jump: 1. Epley Bullock, 6-0 1/2; 2. (tie) Erin Hannon 5-8; 4. Shubert, 5-8; 7. Audrey Svane, 5-6.



Nebraska senior Sheryl Morgan won the 600 in a personal-best time of 1:20.63.

Triple jump: 5. Zarinah Suluki-Drakes, 41-5.

Long jump: 5. Leandra McGruder, 19-4 1/4; 6. McMillan, 19-21 1/2; 8. Suluki-Drakes, 18-7 1/4.

Pole vault: 2. Natalie Willer, 13-3/4; 8. (tie) Lindsey Maher, Rachel Birtles, 12-3/4.

Weight throw: 7. Tamara Solari, 60-8 1/2.

60 hurdles: 7. Arna Erega, 8.45; 8. Karyn LaCour, 8.60.

600: 1. Sheryl Morgan, 1:20.63.

Mile: 6. Natalia Zarcenko, 4:49.36.

5000 meters: 3. Lara Crofford, 16:45.23.

1600 relay: 8. (Nikita Eades, Butler, Lynsey Kreikemeier, Morgan) 3:46.95.

Distance medley: 7. (Jennifer Pancoast, Morgan, Kreikemeier, Joslyn Dalton) 11:43.11.

PERSONAL BEST

Morgan, a senior from Kingston, Jamaica, defeated two-time Big 12 indoor champion Morgan Bonds of Kansas State in the 600, with a personal-best time of 1:20.63. Morgan finished strong, prompting Mark Devenney, her event coach, to remark afterward: "She gives me a heart attack sometimes when she started out so slow. But she knows her abilities so well and never lets people get too far away."

Bullock, a sophomore from Allen, Texas, also had a personal best 6-0 1/2 in the high jump, as the Huskers took four of the top eight places.



Epley Bullock

Jonas, a senior from La Vernia, Texas, equaled his personal best, 7-5, to finish second to Kansas State's Scott Sellers (7-6) in the men's high jump.

FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING

Freshmen made a significant contribution to the Huskers' second-place finishes. Including relays, eight freshmen on the women's team and seven on the men's team scored points during the two-day event. On the women's side: Svane, Erega, LaCour, Butler, Kreikemeier, Crofford, Willer, Birtles. On the men's side: Hamilton, Jordan, Fourie, Dailey, Gordon, Conahan, Rewaka.

Fourie edged Husker teammate Ross, a sophomore, for second in the 60 hurdles. Gordon finished one place ahead of Jonas in the long jump.

FIRST-DAY LEAD

The Husker women led after the first day of competition, on the strength of their finish in the Pentathlon — five of eight places, good for 23 points. Three Huskers scored points in both the long jump and pole vault on the first day, as well. The Nebraska men were fourth going into the final day of competition on Saturday, March 1.

NCAA CHAMPIONSHIPS

The NCAA Indoor Championship meet was scheduled for March 14-15 at Fayetteville, Ark., with the Huskers opening the outdoor season the weekend of April 4-5, at three meets: Jim Click Shootout in Tucson, Ariz.; Stanford Invitational in Palo Alto, Calif.; and the Emporia State Relays in Emporia, Kan.

The Huskers are scheduled to compete at home outdoors on April 27 and May 10 before playing host to the NCAA Midwest Regional, May 30-31.

AS GOOD AS IT GETS

Track and Field News celebrated 60 years of publication with a list of the top track and field athletes over the past six decades, and former Husker Merlene Ottey was named the best collegiate woman sprinter. Ottey won 14 national championships at Nebraska from 1980 to 1984. She also competed in seven consecutive Olympic Games for Jamaica. She still holds 13 Husker records, including four with relay teams.

Her national championships included:

Indoors — 55-meter dash (1984), 60-yard dash (1982), 300-yard dash (1982), 4x220-yard relay (1982), 60-meter dash (1981), 300-meter dash (1980-81);

Outdoors — 100-meter dash (1983), 200-meter dash (1983), 100 meters (1982), 4x100-meter relay (1982), 100 meters (1981), 200 meters (1980-81). ■

QUICK HITS

THREE CHAMPIONS

Sophomore Jordan Burroughs, the No. 1 seed at 149 pounds, was chosen the "Outstanding Wrestler of the Meet" in leading Nebraska to a second-place finish at the Big 12 Championships at Stillwater, Okla., on March 8.

Burroughs had two bonus-point victories on his way to an individual title, earning 10 takedowns in a 24-9 semifinal victory against Oklahoma's Will Rowe then getting a 15-6 major decision against Iowa State's Mitch Mueller in the finals.

Cornhusker juniors Paul Donahoe and Brandon Browne also won titles, Donahoe at 125 pounds, Browne at 174 pounds. The three individual titles were Nebraska's most since 1995, and its 62.5 team points were the most ever at the Big 12 meet.

The Cornhuskers also finished second in 2004.

The NCAA Championships are scheduled for March 20-22 in St. Louis, Mo.

TEAM SCORING

Iowa State 75.5 points, Nebraska 62.5, Oklahoma State 52.5, Missouri 49.5, Oklahoma 24

NEBRASKA RESULTS

125

Semifinals: (1 seed) Paul Donahoe (NU) decision Tyler Clark (ISU), 2-1; **Finals:** Donahoe decision Tyler Shinn (OSU), 7-4

Donahoe first

133

Semifinals: Nick Fanthorpe (ISU) decision (3 seed) Kenny Jordan (NU), 4-1 TB; **Consolation:** Jordan major decision Brian Shelton (OU), 8-0; **Third:** Coleman Scott (OSU) decision Jordan, 3-0

Jordan fourth

141

Semifinals: Nick Gallick (ISU) decision (3 seed) Mike Rowe (NU), 2-0; **Consolation:** Rowe decision Marcus Hoehn (MU), 6-1; **Third:** Zach Bailey (OU) decision Rowe, 3-2

Rowe fourth

149

Semifinals: (1 seed) Jordan Burroughs (NU) technical fall Will Rowe (OU), 24-9; **Finals:** Burroughs major decision Mitch Mueller (ISU), 15-6

Burroughs first

157

Pigtail: Newly McSpadden (OSU) fall (4 seed) Chris Oliver (NU), 1:32; **Consolation:** Olive decision Chad Terry (OU), 7-6; **Third:** McSpadden decision Oliver, 7-1

Oliver fourth



Jordan Burroughs

165

Semifinals: (3 seed) Stephen Dwyer (NU) decision Jake Dieffenbach (OSU), 3-1 SV; **Finals:** Nick Marable (MU) decision Dwyer, 3-2

Dwyer second

174

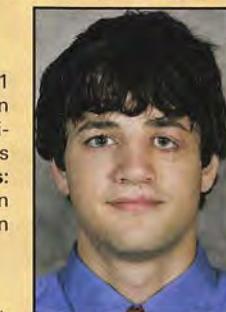
Semifinals: (1 seed) Brandon Browne (NU) decision Emanuel Brooks (MU), 7-6 TB; **Finals:** Browne decision Brandon Mason (OSU), 7-6

Browne first

184

Pigtail: Jack Jensen (OSU) decision (4 seed) Vince Jones (NU), 3-2; **Consolation:** Raymond Jordan (MU) decision Jones, 8-3

Jones fifth



Brandon Browne

197

Semifinal: (3 seed) Craig Brester (NU) decision Joel Flaggert (OU), 6-2; **Final:** Max Askren (MU) decision Brester, 8-3

Brester second

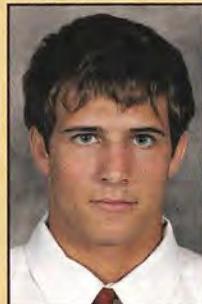
Heavyweight

Semifinal: Jared Rosholt (OSU) fall (3 seed) Jon May (NU), 6:06; **Consolation:** May decision Nathan Fernandez (OU), 5-2; **Third:** Mark Ellis (MU) decision May, 3-1 SV

May fourth

BRAINS AND BRAWN

Brester and Dwyer, both sophomores, were named to the 2008 Academic All-Big 12 wrestling team. Brester was a first-team selection for a second consecutive year. Dwyer was named to the second team. Brester is a mechanized systems major, while Dwyer has yet to declare a major. First-team honorees must maintain a 3.20 or higher grade-point average. Second-team recognition requires a 3.00 to 3.19 GPA.



Paul Donahoe

CONTINUED SUCCESS

Former Cornhusker wrestler Brad Vering is a finalist for the James E. Sullivan Award, presented annually by the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) to the nation's top amateur athlete. AAU officials, U.S. Olympic Committee members and college sports information directors are among those who vote for the award.

Vering was the U.S. Olympic Committee's 2007 Wrestling Male Athlete of the Year, after winning a silver medal at 185 pounds (84 kilograms) to lead the U.S. Greco-Roman team to its first title at the World Championships in September.

Vering was the seventh national champion in Cornhusker history, defeating Iowa State's Zack Thompson in a tiebreaker, 2-1, at 197 pounds in 2000.

NCAA SCHOLARSHIPS

Husker volleyball players Christina Houghtelling, Sarah Pavan and Tracy Stalls were among 29 female student-athletes in fall sports chosen to receive NCAA post-graduate scholarships. Each will get

a \$7,500 scholarship for post-graduate work.

Houghtelling, who received an undergraduate degree in December, is playing professionally in Puerto Rico and will join the Wayne State (Neb.) volleyball coaching staff next season. She was a two-time AVCA All-American and the 2005 AVCA National Player of the Year, as well as the Big 12 "Defensive Player of the Year." She also was a two-time Academic All-American.

Pavan, among the most decorated student-athletes in Husker history, is finishing an undergraduate degree this semester and will play professionally in Italy next season. She was a four-time, first-team All-American, one of just four volleyball players in NCAA Division I history to be so honored. She was the AVCA National Player of the Year in 2006, the 2006-07 Broderick Cup winner and a three-time Big 12 "Player of the Year," as well as a three-time Academic All-American.

Stalls, currently training with the U.S. National Team in Colorado Springs, Colo., was a two-time AVCA All-American and just the second Husker in history to hit .400 or better in consecutive seasons. She finished among the school career leaders in blocks (fourth) and block assists (third). She was a first-team Academic All-American in 2007.

NEW SWA

Pat Logsdon has been named Nebraska's senior women's administrator, replacing Rhonda Revelle, who stepped down in order to focus on coaching the Husker women's softball team. She is in her 16th season as coach. Her teams have made 13 consecutive NCAA Tournament appearances.



Pat Logsdon

Logsdon has worked in the athletic department since 1979, serving as director of football operations in 1997, the first female in NCAA Division I to serve in that capacity. She was promoted to associate athletic director for administration in 2007, after previously serving as assistant athletic director for administration.

SOCER

Molly Thomas, the state of Nebraska's Gatorade Player of the Year at Millard North High School, signed a letter of intent with coach John Walker's Husker soccer team in early February. She is the only member of the 2008 recruiting class.

The 2007 recruiting class included 14, all freshmen, including six who redshirted. The Huskers lost only three players to graduation, one of whom was a starter. In addition, Aysha Jamani and Shannon Dickerson will return after being sidelined by injuries. ■

CROSSWORD

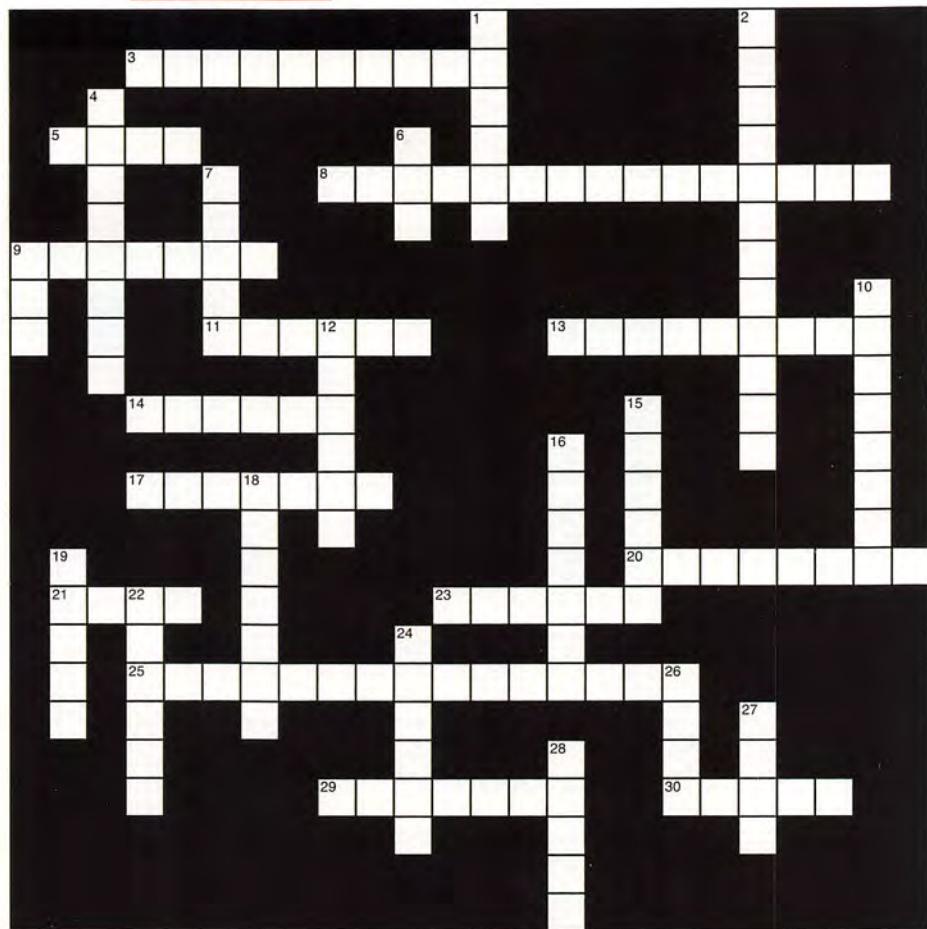
ACROSS

- 3 April 19 event
- 5 Cornerback out for spring with knee injury
- 8 Opponent in 2008 opener
- 9 Defensive assistant who played at NU
- 11 Offensive assistant who played at NU
- 13 First road opponent in 2008
- 14 Wears No. 98
- 17 Leading tackler in 2006
- 20 Leading tackler in 2007
- 21 Leading rusher in 2005
- 23 Head football strength coach
- 25 Opponent in 2009 opener
- 29 Recruiting coordinator
- 30 Leading rusher in 2007

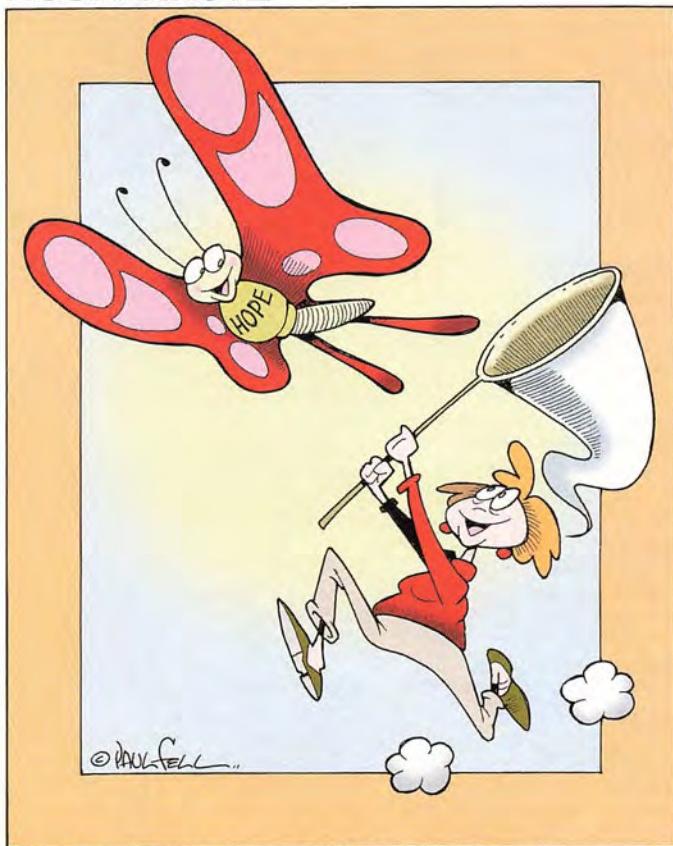
DOWN

- 1 Junior college tight end recruit
- 2 ACC opponent in 2008
- 4 Joe Ganz's home state
- 6 2007 national champion
- 7 All-Big 12 center (basketball)
- 9 Defensive lineman from Oregon
- 10 2006, 2007 special teams MVP
- 12 Wears No. 99
- 15 Leading tackler in 2005
- 16 Leading rusher in 2006
- 18 Most-experienced linebacker returning
- 19 Tight ends coach
- 22 Bo Pelini's college position
- 24 2000 Rimington Award winner
- 26 Bo Pelini's older brother
- 27 Running backs coach
- 28 2007 Heisman Trophy winner

Answers in May issue



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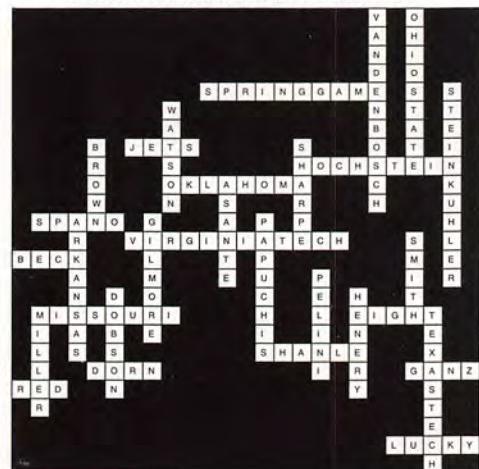
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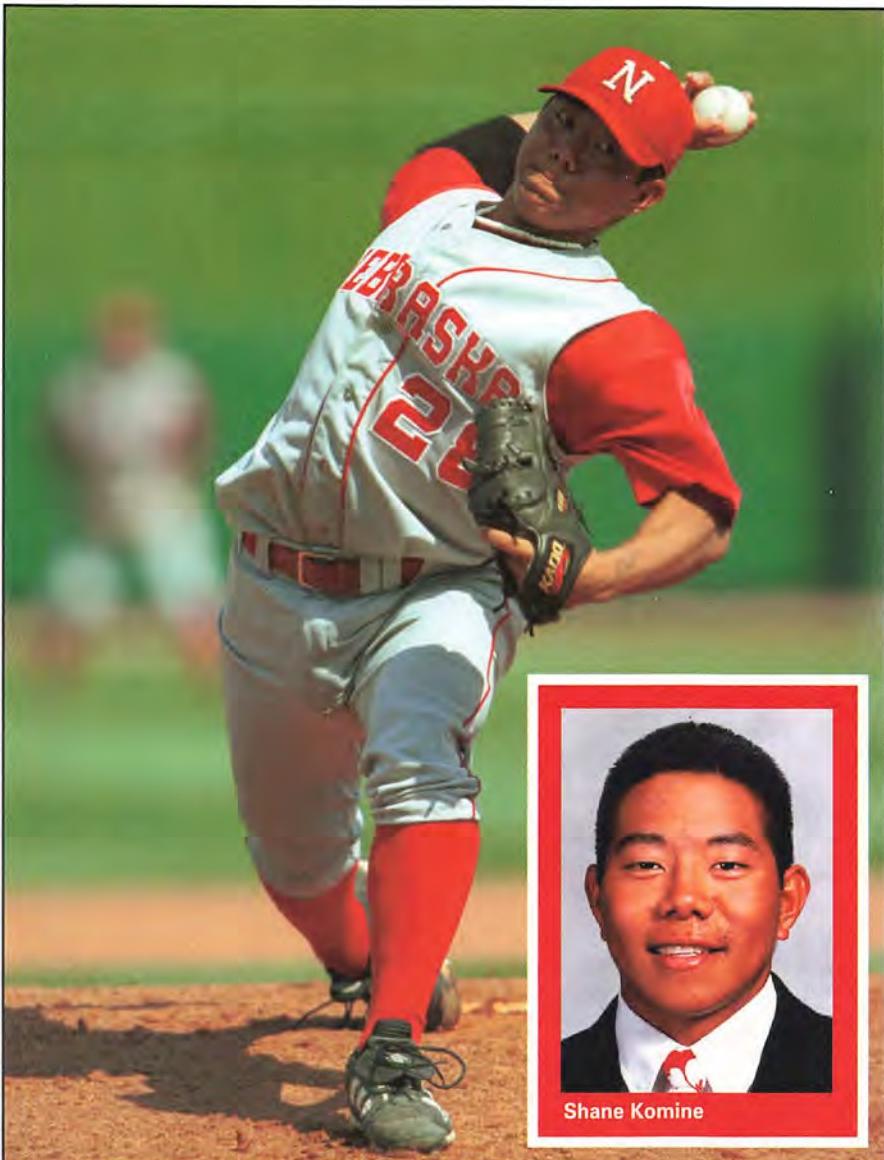
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MARCH CROSSWORD SOLUTION



KING OF THE HILL



Scott Balda

(Johnny Dorn began his senior season with 31 career victories, 10 short of Komine's school record. Dorn ranked fourth in innings pitched (280.1) and starts (43) and tied for eighth in strikeouts (196.).

SHANE KOMINE (1999-02) NO. 28 5-9, 175 Honolulu, Hawaii

Komine is the gold standard among Cornhusker pitchers, or the Cadillac. Former Nebraska pitching coach Rob Childress once used that image to describe calling pitches for Komine: "It's like getting in a Cadillac and being able to push all the buttons and go." Few could have imagined the success Komine would have when he arrived at Nebraska, an inch or two shorter and 40 pounds or so lighter than his senior season. In addition, he was hampered by injuries, a back problem, a right shoulder that required arthroscopic surgery and tendonitis in his right elbow that sidelined him more than a month of his senior year. As a sophomore, he suffered a broken jaw in the NCAA regional at Minneapolis and came back to pitch in the super regional at Stanford. Through it all he pitched with the precision described by Childress, finishing with school records for victories (41), strikeouts (510) and innings pitched (431). The 510 strikeouts were the fifth most in NCAA history. And he walked only 134. He was the Big 12 "Pitcher of the Year" and the only two-time, first-team All-American in school history. And he helped the Cornhuskers reach the College World Series twice. He was considered a longshot to reach the major leagues, also because of his size and the injury problems. He returned to Nebraska for his senior year after being selected in the 19th round of the major league draft. A year later, he was a ninth-round pick. He reached the majors in 2006. ■

LISTS

CAREER PITCHING VICTORIES

Shane Komine (1999-02)	41
Johnny Dorn (2005-present)	*31
Jeff Anderson (1981-84)	30
Mike Zajeski (1988-92)	24
Jamie Rodrigue (2000-03)	23
Cliff Faust (1977-80)	22
R.D. Spihs (1999-01)	21
Zach Kroenke (2003-05)	20
Jim Sandstedt (1946-49)	20
Tim Burke (1978-80)	19
John Lepley (1985-88)	19

CAREER STRIKEOUTS

Shane Komine (1999-02)	510
Mike Zajeski (1988-92)	289
John Lepley (1985-88)	233
Joba Chamberlain (2005-06)	232
Josh Bullock (1990-92)	225
Bob Sebra (1981-83)	212
Jamie Rodrigue (2000-03)	200
Johnny Dorn (2005-present)	*196
Zach Kroenke (2003-05)	196
Cliff Faust (1977-80)	191

CAREER COMPLETE GAMES

Shane Komine (1999-02)	18
Jeff Anderson (1981-84)	16
Tim Burke (1978-80)	16
Cliff Faust (1977-80)	16
Jeff Costello (1976-79)	16
Ryan Kurosaki (1971-73)	14
Jim Sandstedt (1946-49)	14
Steve Gehrke (1980-83)	13
Kirk Eymann (1974-77)	12
Al Furby (1967-69)	12

*Totals prior to 2008 season

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Will Blackshirts Be Back?

Appalling defensive statistics led to the end of another streak in 2007



**Mike
BABCOCK**

THE CONSECUTIVE SELLOUT STREAK at Memorial Stadium continues. But every other meaningful streak related to Nebraska football has ended since Tom Osborne stepped aside as head coach following the 1997 national championship season.

The first to go was a 47-game home winning streak ended by Texas, 20-16, in 1998, Frank Solich's first season as head coach. The second was a 33-season streak of nine or more victories that ended in 2002, when the Cornhuskers finished 7-7.

A 27-23 loss against Mississippi (and quarterback Eli Manning) in the 2002 Independence Bowl also ended a streak of 40 winning seasons. But Nebraska at least earned a bowl bid for a 34th consecutive season, a streak that would end at 35.

In 2004, Bill Callahan's first season as coach, the two most significant streaks came to an end. Cornhusker fans had to endure a losing record for the first time since 1961, a streak of 42 seasons. And, of course, Nebraska didn't receive a bowl bid.

Another streak came to an end last season, less obvious but no less meaningful than those that ended in 2004. There were no Blackshirts by season's end.

Early in the season, cornerback and co-captain Zack Bowman turned in his Blackshirt, based on the belief he wasn't playing up to the standard the black practice jersey represented. None of his teammates followed suit at the time.

Later in the season, however, all of the black practice jerseys were pulled, and justifiably so. Nebraska's defensive statistics were appalling.

The Cornhuskers ranked No. 112 nationally in total defense (476.8 yards), No. 114 in scoring defense (37.9 points) and No. 116 in rushing defense (232 yards). And the numbers were worse in conference games, 511.8 yards and 42.2 points.

The total defense and scoring defense numbers were both school records, shattering the previous marks of 379.5 yards and 30.1 points in 1948. Ordinarily, numbers make for mundane reading. But the ones cited here can't be ignored.

Most Nebraska fans understand the Blackshirt tradition. For those who don't, however, here is an abbreviated version, with a citation regarding one of the first instances of the term "Blackshirt" (or "Black Shirt") appearing in print.

In 1964, NCAA substitution rules were changed to allow for two platoons, offense and defense. Prior to that, most played offense and defense. Basically the rule was, when a player was replaced, he couldn't return until the next quarter.

Anyway, Nebraska played its 1964 opener against outmanned South Dakota with first-team players going both ways. But the next week at practice, prior to a game at

Minnesota, coach Bob Devaney divided the team into offense and defense.

To differentiate the defense, players wore sleeveless pullovers. The sweat-clothes gray pullovers didn't provide enough contrast, however, so offensive backs coach Mike Corgan was dispatched to a local sporting goods store.

The store offered black pullovers at a good price because they hadn't sold well. Corgan, whose nickname was "Iron Mike," had a reputation for frugality — defensive line coach George Kelly once described him, affectionately, as "cheap" — and snapped them up.

"Honestly, it was an accident of availability," Kelly said years later.

The black pullovers were distributed to the first-team defenders before each practice and turned in afterward. That changed later, though even then if a player wasn't performing up to standard, he could lose the Blackshirt.

Initially, only 11 players received Blackshirts. In recent years, with more situational alignments, the number increased. And over time, the term Blackshirts came to refer to the entire defense, not just those who wore the black jerseys in practice.

Nebraska ranked second in the nation in total defense in 1964, allowing 167 yards per game. The Cornhuskers won their first nine games and were fourth in the Associated Press poll, until a 17-7 loss at Oklahoma ended their regular season.

They lost against No. 2 Arkansas in the Cotton Bowl, 10-7.

Hal Brown, sports editor of the Lincoln (Neb.) Star, referred to the "Black Shirt" defense in a season summary written for the official Cotton Bowl program. So what has become a unique tradition

was immediately acknowledged in print.

Monte Kiffin was the first Nebraska assistant to have the title "defensive coordinator." Osborne conferred it in his first season as head coach, 1973. Lance Van Zandt followed Kiffin. And Charlie McBride followed Van Zandt, after one season in which no assistant carried the defensive coordinator's title.

McBride had the most impact on the Blackshirt tradition because he was defensive coordinator from 1982 to 1999, during which Nebraska ranked in the top 10 in total defense 11 times. Such success has been essential to the tradition.

The tradition was firmly established when McBride became defensive coordinator. It was established when Kelly left for Notre Dame following the 1968 season.

Last season the Blackshirt tradition wasn't maintained. Unlike the streaks, however, the damage can be repaired. And the repairs can begin this spring. ■



Charlie McBride had the most impact on the Blackshirt tradition.

Mike Babcock is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for nearly 30 years. Mike can be reached at MBABCOCK1@neb.rr.com or P.O. Box 6782, Lincoln, NE 68506.



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